THE STATUS OF CONFESSIONAL CONSERVATISM: BACKGROUND AND ISSUES IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH--MISSOURI SYNOD

by

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INTRODUCTION

In the month of July, 1969, the Lutheran Church --Missouri Synod assembled in its biennial convention at Denver, Colorado. The delegates consisted of clergy, laymen and synodically trained teachers and professors of the 122-year old body. Without doubt, these men approached Denver either with foreboding, or with a sense of exhilaration over the prospects of settling some long-standing and significant problems.

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, popularly thought of as conservative and orthodox, has from its inception been plagued by the persistent problem of what constitutes "conservatism" and "orthodoxy." The history of Synod, as reflected in its convention resolutions, proceedings and various doctrinal statements, is indicative of the fact that it has had to deal with the identical forces and trends faced by other branches of contemporary Christianity. With the gradual breakdown of cultural, ethnic and geographic isolation, these questions and problems have become more heated and intense. This is especially true of the period following World War II and culminating for purposes of this study at Denver in 1969.

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The Denver Convention, while dealing with a variety of matters, took two unprecedented actions. For the second time in Synodical history, an incumbent president was defeated while actively seeking re-election. The second action was convention assent to a declaration of altar and prayer fellowship with the traditionally more moderate American Lutheran Church. As this paper will attempt to show, these two actions were apparently contradictory. They do, however, vividly demonstrate the division and polarization of this 2.8 million-member organization.

It is the purpose of this study to examine the issues at dispute in this largest conservative Lutheran body in the United States. Not only are they peculiarly Lutheran, but they are also reflective of tensions within all branches of Christianity.

CHAPTER I

FIRST PERIOD OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH--MISSOURI SYNOD

In summarizing briefly the general development of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Carl S. Meyer has provided a useful periodization. He divides the history of the Synod into three periods: 1847 to 1887, 1887 to 1932, 1932 to the present: "It is this writer's opinion that the Missouri Synod is approaching the end of the third epoch and that her history can best be understood and evaluated by seeing her 115 years divided into three eras, each approximately the span of a generation."[1]

While recognizing that such periodization is somewhat arbitrary and thus suffers from the hazards of artificially designated epochs, the dates established by Meyer are defensible. Sociological, ecclesiastical and theological factors tend to be the variables. It is an understanding of these variables that sheds light on current problems within the Lutheran Church--Missouri

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[1]Carl S. Meyer, "The Historical Background of the Brief Statement," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXII (July, 1961), No. 7, 403.

Synod.

Foundations: The First Period, 1847-1887

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States, later to be known simply as The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, was organized in 1847 and comprised congregations in Missouri with mission congregations founded through the efforts of Wilhelm Loehe in Ohio and in the Saginaw Valley of Michigan. Chief among its founders were C. F. W. Walther and his Missouri associates.[2]

The Saxon emigrants had come over in 1839 for reasons best expressed in the "Emigration Regulations."

> All the undersigned acknowledge with sincerity of heart the pure Lutheran faith as contained in the Word of God, the Old and New Testaments and set forth and confessed in the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church. After deliberate and mature counsel they can, humanly speaking, see no possibility of retaining in their present home this faith pure and undefiled, of confessing it and transmitting it to their posterity. Hence, they feel in duty bound to emigrate and to look for a country where this Lutheran faith is not endangered and where they can serve God undisturbed in the way of grace revealed and ordained by Him, and where they can enjoy without being interfered with, fully without adulation, the means of grace ordained by God for all men unto salvation, and can preserve them in their integrity and purity for

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[2]Walter A. Baepler, A Century of Grace (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 97-106.

> themselves and their children. ... Such a country as they are looking for is the United States of North America; for there, as nowhere else in the world, perfect religious and civil liberty prevails.[3]

This statement seems to add credence to a belief that would remain popular in the Missouri Synod concerning the founding fathers. This tradition states that the spiritual side of life in Saxony during the first third of the nineteenth century was dominated by the Age of Rationalism: "Usually such adjectives as 'dark,' 'bleak,' 'sterile' and 'oppressive' are added to make the picture supposedly complete."[4] Missouri writers tended to assume that rationalism was exclusively dominant, that it was a growing power during this decade and that it was making life impossible for a Bible-based faith.[5]

Rationalism, for purposes of this study, is identified as "the last stage of a movement that began

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[3]Erwin L. Lueker, ed., Concordia Cyclopedia (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), pp. 606-607.

[4]Carl S. Mundinger, Government in the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 17 ff.

[5]Christian Hochstetter, Die Geschichte der Evangelisch--Lutherischer Missouri Synode (Dresden: Heinrich Naumann, 1885), pp. 4-7. See also W. H. T. Dau, ed., Ebenezer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922).

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with the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century and that eventually made human reason the sole arbiter of Christian doctrine."[6] The facts indicate that this was not the case in Saxony. On the contrary, rationalism, which came to Germany late, was perhaps least vital in Saxony. There it remained mild and seldom went to extremes.[7] By the 1830's it apparently was dead or dying throughout the region, according to Wilhelm Sihler, one of the emigrants and the first vice president of the Missouri Synod.[8]

How did this view of religious conditions in Saxony come into being? Sihler interpreted it as based upon the description given by the Pietists of the day and by men who needed a justification for their emigration:[9]

> It is in the very nature of pietism to emphasize evil. The pietist wishes to feel his personal wickedness. He measures the sincerity of his repentance by the depth of his feeling concerning evil. He loves to wallow in the mire of his own unworthiness. From individual to social evil is but a short step. The world is bad and the righteous must flee from it.[10]

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[6]Mundinger, op. cit., p. 18.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Wilhelm Sihler, Lebenslauf (St. Louis: Druckerei des Lutheran Concordia-Verlags, 1879), I, 91.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Ibid.

The Pietism of the early 1830's was still in conflict with the remnants of rationalism in Germany, and as Mundinger points out, in this struggle arguments are often overstated. Rationalism emphasizing the good in man had to be offset by emphasis on the evil. This type of argumentation and rationalization was used by Martin Stephan, the driving force behind the Saxon emigration.[11]

The first wave of Missouri's founding fathers, numbering approximately 750 persons, left their homes and friends in November, 1838, and arrived in St. Louis in early 1839. Some of them remained in St. Louis, forming the nucleus of Trinity congregation, while the rest moved to Perry County, Missouri.[12]

Controversy soon emerged pertaining to the polity and governance of the Missouri Saxon settlements and congregations. As some of the Synod's future leaders remembered the events later, Martin Stephan, the leader of the immigration movement, was instrumental in bringing this issue to a head, although not intentionally. This he did by capitalizing on the sincerity of his followers

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[11]Johann F. Koestering, Leben and Wirken des Ernst Gerhard Wilhelm Keyl (St. Louis: Druckerei des Lutheran Concordia Verlags, 1882), pp. 47-49.

[12]Baepler, op. cit., pp. 28-32.

> who had emigrated because they believed that their faith could not be maintained in Saxony. To them purity of Lutheran doctrine and Christian living meant everything. Luther's teaching concerning the means of grace had taught them to honor those who proclaimed the Gospel and administered the Sacraments. For years Stephan had adroitly manipulated this doctrine so that very many of the colonists were of the firm conviction that Stephan was their chief means of grace and that outside and apart from him there was no hope.[13]

Stephan's desire for personal power is evident in the constitutions which he drew up and which are on deposit in the Concordia Historical Institute in St. Louis, One paragraph in these "Ordnungen" is illustrative: "The supreme administration of all the association's affairs is in the hands of the first clergyman, who combines in his person the highest powers in both spiritual and secular affairs."[14] And again: "The first clergyman is to be treated with the proper respect and honor commensurate with his title: 'Most Honorable Lord,' Disrespect for this person is punishable with serious civil and ecclesiastical penalties."[15]

During the voyage from Germany, Stephan had

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[13]Mundinger, op. cit., p. 94.

[14]Fasciculus IV, No. 4, on deposit at Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri.

[15]Ibid.

persuaded his fellow passengers to elect him bishop, urging the need for central authority. Under the pressure of establishing a community in a strange land, this so-called "Romanizing tendency" had taken strong hold.[16] The implication was that the Lutheran Church, more specifically those who had followed Stephan, comprised the true visible church without which there was no salvation. Further, the ministers of this church were viewed as mediators deserving of obedience in all things not directly forbidden by the Word. Questions of doctrine, so the Stephanites held, were the province of the clergy, with their hold on the Office of the Keys.[17] This, of course, was not altogether different from the form the Saxon State Church had assumed since Luther's day. While Luther had a great deal to say about the role of individual lay Christians in the decision-making process of the church, the exigencies of the situation on the Continent had never made lay power a reality. On the contrary, the Lutheran Church in those hundred years had developed a system of governance in which the laity had less and less to say.

On May 5, 1839, Stephan was charged with certain

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[16] Baepler, op. cit., p. 33.

[17] Carl Eduard Vehse, Die Stephansche Auswanderung nach Amerika (Dresden: Verlag von Heinrich J. Naumann, 1840), pp. 19-23, 142-151.

sexual indiscretions with three young ladies of the group who had confessed to Pastor G. H. Loeber.[18] Considering his position and apparent charismatic qualities, to say that this produced chaos would be an understatement: "By unanimous vote of the clergy, without even a trace of participation on the part of the laymen other than the conventional 'Ja' vote Stephan was excommunicated, deposed, and removed from the colony"[19] by being transported across the Mississippi to the Illinois side.

The results of the Stephan case can be characterized as confusing and chaotic. The people of the colony felt that they had given Stephan too much authority and tended to become introspective. The introspection was that of people who suddenly discover that they have been apparently duped by a charismatic charlatan. As C. S. Meyer says, "to the hardships of establishing themselves were added doubts and misgivings about their entire course of action. Had they acted right in leaving Saxony? Could they still lay claim to being a church? What assurance did they have that even the sacraments administered by the pastors among them

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Mundinger, op. cit., p. 89.

were valid? Misgivings and questions of this kind troubled them for almost two years."[20]

This dilemma is a testimony to the hold Stephan had on the Saxon Perry County community. As Mundinger says, "So completely had Stephan schooled these men that the simple principles enunciated by Luther in the early fifteen hundred and twenties were completely ignored."[21] There was utter confusion as to what Scripture, Luther or the confessional writings said. Stephan had presumably cultivated this confusion to his own personal advantage. Ernst G. W. Keyl, the first Pastor at Frohna, Missouri,[22] and one of the original emigrants to Perry County, gives a lucid description of Stephan's technique:

> Repeatedly and most earnestly did Stephan recommend the reading of the Holy Scriptures, the Confessional Writings of the Lutheran Church, the works of Luther and other reliable Lutheran theological; however he got me into the habit of regarding his interpretation of the Scriptures as the only true and correct one, and to look at the writings of Lutheran theologians through glasses which he himself had colored. Thus it happened that I used the writings of Luther and other Lutheran

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[20]Carl S. Meyer, A Brief Historical Sketch of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod (St. Louis; Concordia Publishing House, 1963), p. 8.

[21]Mundinger, op. cit., p. 88.

[22]Concordia Cyclopedia, p. 549.

> theologians as a means of developing and intensifying "Stephanism." Gradually and imperceptibly Stephan aroused mistrust of these Lutheran theologians in our hearts by pointing out certain defects in their writings. Whenever Luther's writings were in conflict with his teachings, he would say "Luther must be taken in a different sense, at another place he has said something which shows that this statement must be taken in a different sense, or he would say: "This does not suit our times."[23]

This statement deserves some further comment. Keyl unwittingly pointed at some factors that appear time and again in the story of Lutheranism in general and the Missouri Synod in particular. While it is true that Scripture is authoritative and that the standard confessions, that is, those contained in the Symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church,[24] are held to be a correct exposition of Scripture, the question remains who shall interpret Scripture and the confessions. The answer for Lutherans would seem to be to consult Luther, Melanchthon, Chemnitz, or some other recognized Lutheran theologian. Keyl, a product of Leipzig University, and the other young university-trained Lutheran theologians[25] with the Saxon colonists

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[23]E. G. W. Keyl, Bekenntnisse, in Rudelbach and Guerickes, Zeitschrift, III (Leipzig: 1842), No. 1, p. 99.

[24]Handbook, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, compiled by order of the Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969), p. 15.

[25]Concordia Cyclopedia, p. 549.

evidently saw inconsistencies in Luther or at least areas where Scripture, Luther, and the confessions were far from clear. It is not overstating the case to say that the history of Missouri is marked by periodic disturbances revolving about the following questions: What does Scripture mean? What do the confessional writings really say? To a lesser extent, what did Luther and the classical Lutheran theologians mean? These questions have been present in Lutheranism from the beginning. The circumstances surrounding Missouri's birth accentuated them, and they remain part of her heritage. Until rather recently, the question was interpretation and not authority. The question of authority becomes important again in the second third of the twentieth century.

Carl F. W. Walther identified the immediate problems and provided solutions in the "Altenburg Theses"[26] and thus saved the community from utter collapse. In essence these eight statements made the following points:

> (1) "The true church is the totality (Gesamtheit) of all true believers.
> (2) The name of the True Church also belongs to all those visible societies in

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[26]Translated in Concordia Cyclopedia, p. 21. Cf. Hochstetter, op. cit.

> whose midst the Word of God is purely taught and the Holy Sacraments administered according to Christ's institution. (3) The name Church also belongs to such visible societies as are united in the confession of a falsified faith, provided they retain in its purity so much of the Word and the Sacraments as is necessary that children of God may be born. (4) It is not improper to apply the name church to heterodox societies, since that is in accord with the manner of speech of the Word of God itself. (5) Even heterodox societies have church power and the treasures of the church. (6) A heterodox church is not necessarily cut off from Universal Christian Church. (7) Heterodox societies are not to be dissolved, but reformed. (8) The orthodox church is to be judged principally by the common, orthodox, and public confession to which the members acknowledge themselves to be pledged.[27]

Walther's successful defense of these theses in theological debate achieved its purpose. The colonists were convinced that with the presence of the Word, they were a church.[28] The heavy emphasis on the Word and Sacraments as indicative of the presence of the church was further ingrained into the Missourian tradition. In this they were in agreement with Luther[29] and the

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Baepler, op. cit., pp. 48-49.

[29] Martin Luther, "A Sermon on the Ban," translated by Eric W. and Ruth C. Gritsch, in Luther's Works, Vol. 39, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan, Helmuth Lehman, et al. (Philadelphia and St. Louis: Fortress Press and Concordia Publishing House, 1955). Cf. "The Smalcald Articles," in The Book of Concord, The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, edited and translated by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 315.

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confessions.[30] An estimate of the significance of Walther's statements was made some years later by George A. Schieferdecker, then a theological candidate, later president of the Western District of Synod:

> The testimonies of the Holy Scriptures and of the fathers of the church, particularly of Luther and Gerhard, were the arbiters. With convincing clarity it was demonstrated that in spite of all our errors we still had the Lord Jesus, His Word, the blessed Sacrament, and the Office of the Keys and that the Lord had His Church. ... It was the Easter Day of our sorely tried congregation.[31]

The day after the debate on the "Alterburg Theses," Walther returned to St. Louis to assume the pastorate of his recently deceased brother's congregation. There he remained as pastor till his death forty-six years later.[32] It was from St. Louis, which now became the center of Saxon-Lutheran activity, that Walther began the publication of Der Lutheraner.[33] It was this theological journal that was the chief factor in establishing contact between the various German Lutheran immigrant groups and the Missourians. On

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Western District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Missouri, Ohio, and other States, Proceedings of the Second Annual Meeting (St. Louis, 1856), p. 7.

[32] Baepler, op. cit., pp. 49-52.

[33] Ibid.

September 7, 1844, the first number was issued. Fourteen years later Walther issued a statement which not only explains the purposes of Der Lutheraner, but gives insights into the future course of the Synod. "The conditions in the Lutheran Church in America caused us to resolve together with several other Lutheran pastors who had emigrated with us to publish a little paper, which under the frank and honest name of Der Lutheraner was to serve our beloved church according to local needs as God would give us grace. The prospects of such a paper were dark indeed. ... Our expectations or, at least, our pretensions did not extend any further than to carry about as many papers into wider circles as were necessary to present an unmistakable public testimony as to what the Lutheran Church and its doctrine really is."[34]

The suspicion of other branches of Lutheranism in America was explicit, and Der Lutheraner attracted the attention of the like-minded. Friederich Conrad Dietrich Wyneken in Fort Wayne, Indiana, expressed the feelings of conservative American Lutheranism upon receipt of the first issue when he exclaimed: "Thank God, there are still Lutherans in America."[35] Dr.

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[34]D. H. Steffens, Doctor Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1917), p. 234.

[35]Ibid.

Wilhelm Sihler, at that time working in Ohio, wrote in his autobiography: "It was a great joy to receive the first number of Der Lutheraner--I did not hesitate to recommend the paper to any congregation, since Lutherans needed such a periodical, for many of them did not know what Lutneranism was and why they called themselves Lutherans. Naturally I soon entered into extended correspondence with the editor."[36] This spirit of doctrinal exclusiveness led directly to the formation of the Evangelischen Lutherische Synode von Missouri, Ohio und anderen Staaten, after some preliminary meetings, in Chicago on April 26, 1847, with C. F. W. Walther as its first president.[37]

The formation of Synod was the culmination of a desire for organic union of those churches which considered themselves to be "authentically Lutheran." The meaning of the term "authentic Lutheran" is important to the understanding of later developments. It was best spelled out by Walther himself in a letter dated August 21, 1845. He specified six characteristics of an "authentically Lutheran" synodical group: (1) The

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[36]Sihler, op. cit., I, 84.

[37]Synodalberichte der deutschen Evangelischen Lutherische Synode von Missouri, Ohio, und anderen Staaten vom Jahre 1847 bis 1860 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1876), p. 16.

constitution of the synod must be based upon the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church. (2) The constitution of the synod must obligate all members of synod to ban all syncretistic activity from their midst. (3) The chief objective of the synod should be to conserve, promote, and watch over the unity and purity of Lutheran doctrine. (4) The synod should not be a court with power and authority to execute laws, but rather a consultative body, to which the perplexed might take refuge and seek counsel; the member congregations' right of calling a pastor must be safeguarded against every attempt at highhanded officiousness. (5) Lay delegates should have the same right of suffrage as the clergy, but a clergyman should be chairman at the meetings. (6) Every member congregation should have the right to pass judgement on the decisions and resolutions of the synod.[38] These characteristics reflect the Saxons' grave distrust of centralized authority and overwhelming concern with the maintenance of pure Scriptural and confessional unity. With only a few insignificant word changes they became the constitutional objectives of synod.[39] Along with

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[38]Carl F. W. Walther, Briefe, edited by Ludwig Fuerbringer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1915), pp. 15-19.

[39]Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, "Constitution," in Handbook of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod

the maintenance of the confessional stand of the affiliated congregation, the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod now faced the task of consolidating itself.

It should be noted here that the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church, that is, Luther's Small and Large Catechisms, the Augsburg Confession, the Apology to the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Formula of Concord,[40] were written under specific circumstances. They were drawn up at the time that Catholicism was codifying itself in systematic form. Therefore, the Lutherans did the same, and not surprisingly developed confessional writings rather "legalistic in tone, representing as they do what Missouri Synod theologian Dr. Arthur Piepkorn calls 'a systemization of the polemics surrounding papal infallibility.' In other words, while the Romans were laying the foundations for the declaration at Vatican Council I (1870) on papal infallibility, the Lutherans were showing up with equal rigidity the doctrine of scriptural infallibility."[41] This task was the hallmark of the "first period" of Missouri's history.

(St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1969), Articles II and III, p. 15.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Kenneth L. Woodward, "The Missouri Synod Lutheran Civil War," The Christian Herald (January, 1971), p. 3.

Kenneth L. Woodward, an associate editor of the non-denominational monthly, The Christian Herald, assesses the first period of the Missouri Synod's history this way:

> Theologically, then, the founders of the LC-MS were children of the aftermath of the Reformation, and they maintained a scholastic adherence to the letter of the Lutheran confessions that more than matched the Romans' adherence to the letter of Scholastic philosophy. Spiritually, however, they were also pietistic Germans who distrusted the world around them. Thus, long after most emigrant groups had adopted English for use in their services and books, LC-MS congregations and scholars were still using their ancestral tongue. This world-wariness also expressed itself in numerous synodical resolutions condemning such modern innovations as the charging of interest, life insurance and women's suffrage.[42]

To support these positions the writers of both the first and second periods of the Synod's history were more and more compelled to fall back on literalistic interpretations and applications of Scripture and the confessions.

Transition: The Second Period

May, 1887, marked the twentieth convention of Synod and its fortieth anniversary of existence. It also marked the death of C. F. W. Walther. In his

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[42] Ibid.

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presidential address, Dr. H. C. Schwan said, "Approximately with this year's meeting we are beginning a new period in the history of our Synod."[43] Although the leadership of Synod was still generally German-born, as was the case with Franz Pieper and George Stoeckhardt, or American-born with strong ethnic German background, as was August Graebner, they were all, nonetheless, of the second generation.[44] These men were all elected in that same year to influential positions at the Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, thus marking a transition in theological leadership.[45]

The change in theological leadership was only one facet of this second period. This era would also see Synod reach and maintain a growth level in relation to the rest of the country, which after 1900 would remain relatively constant up to the period of World War II. Although the immigration from Protestant Germany was heavy in the 1880's, after about 1890, when the frontier was declared closed, it was not largely Lutheran or Protestant. In 1854, 215,009 German immigrants had come to the United States; in 1882, 250,630 had

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[43]Cited by Carl S. Meyer, "The Historical Background of the Brief Statement," op. cit., p. 403.

[44]Concordia Cyclopedia, pp. 817, 1011, 403.

[45]Proceedings, The Missouri Synod, 1887, p. 30.

reached this country. In 1892, there were 119,000 German immigrants, the high point of German immigration that would not be reached again. An average of about 48,200 immigrated between the convention of 1887 and the outbreak of World War I.[46] When compared to the total immigration figures for the same period, it is evident that the character of immigration was changing, a fact that would affect Synodical growth in relation to the total growth of the country.

These facts are summarized by C. S. Meyer:

> In 1880 ... the population of the United States was over 50,000,000; the membership of the Missouri Synod was about 345,000. By 1900, the population of the country was about 76 million; the membership of the Missouri Synod was about 728,000. The membership of the Missouri Synod had climbed during the twenty-year period from .69 to .93 percent, in relation to the population of the country. The percentage was maintained to the middle 1930's. After that time membership of the synod increased proportionately faster than did the population.[47]

During this period there was also a notable movement away from the rural areas and to the growing cities. Although the statistics for the Synod's earlier years are not clear enough to indicate the

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[46] Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), C-94, pp. 56, 57.

[47] C. S. Meyer, A Brief Historical Sketch, p. 19.

exact rural-urban proportions, the trend toward urbanization was undoubtedly there. There are clear indications that while the earlier German immigrants tended to settle on homesteads, the later groups, that is, those arriving after the late 1880's, tended toward non-rural occupations. By 1926, the Missouri Synod was 54.6 percent urban.[48] The impact of these trends on the sociological composition of the synod would be hard to overestimate. The results of the growing urban constituency would begin to show themselves already in the second period of Missouri's history. The breakdown of the pietistic ethnic German community was well underway by 1939. The coming of the Second World War simply speeded up the process. With this breakdown and growing urbanization came a greater exposure to the problems of a secularized society in general, and the wider Christian community in particular. By the latter part of the second period, the synod was strongly rural but increasingly urban. It still had a large contingent of second- and third-wave immigrants, but was moving inevitably towards becoming a

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[48] U.S. Census of Religious Bodies, 1926, in Theological Monthly, IX (May, 1929), p. 142, cited by C. S. Meyer, The Historical Background of the Brief Statement, p. 409.

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predominantly native-born church group.[49] The resulting tensions within the Synod were then but a predictable outgrowth of these pressures. The Missouri Synod was being compelled by circumstances to find a position in a pluralistic society.

The attitude of the leadership of Synod to the growing problems of the Synod were expressed by Franz Pieper: "What does the church need for the twentieth century? Our Synod will retain the pure Gospel and God will permit our Synod to grow and prosper only if she is zealous in her stipulated task, namely, in the perpetuation and the dissemination of the pure Gospel."[50]

What Martin Marty calls the "relative unity in diversity"[51] which marked Protestant evangelical Christianity throughout the major portion of the nineteenth century was being shattered in the early decades of the twentieth. The outgrowth of the Enlightenment and continued rationalism, these forces seemed to be out and out attacks on the very basis of the Christian faith, this especially so to groups like the Missouri Synod who prided themselves on Scriptural and confessional orthodoxy. The origin and authority of the

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[49] Ibid., p. 410. [50] Ibid., p. 415.

[51] Martin E. Marty, A Short History of Christianity (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1959), p. 351.

Bible, the person and work of Christ, the nature of man, the problem of sin, the reality of miracles, the relation of God to the natural order--orthodox views on all these matters were being replaced by a new and radically different theology.[52]

Milton Rudnick, in his study of Fundamentalism's relationship to the Missouri Synod, identifies this radically different theology as consisting of: (1) The theology of religious experience, that is, the personal consciousness of God and the experiencing of His power in the life of the individual. This implies the minimizing of creeds, confessions and Scriptures. (2) Higher Criticism. This tended to stress the human elements in the Bible. The implied task then would be, by using reason and the tools of literary criticism, to discover the historical and religious realities behind the Scriptural accounts. (3) The Theory of Evolution. The idea of evolutionary development, when taken at face value, seems to imply that man is not a unique creature of a personal God. It leaves little room for the Genesis creation, the Fall, the fact of sin, and hence the need for redemption. (4) The Social Gospel. Here the emphasis is on the social and

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[52]Milton L. Rudnick, Fundamentalism and the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 3.

psychological concerns of man and the improvement of society.[53] Together, these four currents comprise the mainstream of theological "modernism" and "liberalism."

This touched off a series of bitter theological controversies among Protestants. On one side were the "Liberals," who sought to adjust revealed and inherited Christianity to the climate of the times. On the other were the "Fundamentalists," who demanded that the old foundations of the faith must stand. To further investigate the precepts and authorities in the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy is outside the scope of this study. It is most significant, however, to see what Missouri's response was. What did her theologians have to say relative to the issues that were troubling the waters of Christianity? As early as 1868, Walther, in a dispute with the Iowa Synod, had taken a stand that would be staunchly maintained by his successors:

> Let everyone who so desires understand that we know how to distinguish between articles of faith and Scripture doctrines which are not articles of faith. We insist that no Scripture doctrine, may it appear great or small, may be regarded as an open question; --we consider it necessary to contend most strenuously for every article of faith (on each of which our faith and hope depend!) to condemn the

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[53] Ibid., pp. 8-12.

> error that opposes it. --We reject it [the error] and deny fellowship to those who err in nothing but this point.[54]

Walther had earlier demonstrated his belief that the Lutheran Church is the true visible church of God on earth because it is the only one with the pure Gospel and Sacraments. The implication of this writing, entitled The Evangelical Lutheran Church the True Visible Church of God on Earth, is that no other church body preaches the pure Gospel nor administers the Sacraments in complete conformity with the Scriptures. Quoting copiously from Scripture, the confessions, and Luther, he develops his ideas in twenty-five theses. Several of them illustrate the exclusiveness that marks the Synod in the first and second periods of its history. This exclusiveness will come under internal attack in the third period. Thesis XIII: "The Evangelical Lutheran Church recognizes the written Word--as the only and perfect source, rule, norm, and judge of all teaching (a) not reason, (b) not tradition, (c) not new revelation." Thesis XIV: "The Evangelical Lutheran Church holds fast to the clearness of Scripture. (There are no "views" and "open questions.")"

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[54]Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, "Die falschen Stuetzen der Modernen Theologie von den offenen Fragen," Lehre und Wehre, XIV (January, 1868), 100.

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Thesis XVI: (c) "The Evangelical Lutheran Church acknowledges only the literal sense has but one sense." Thesis XXII: "True Evangelical Lutheran churches are those only in which the teaching of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as laid down in its Symbols, is not only acknowledged officially, but is also in the vogue in the public preaching."[55]

These theses are not only exclusive in character, but make Walther's church the arbiter of what constitutes true confessional Lutheranism. Conformity to Missouri's conception of orthodoxy in profession and actual practice would thus be the only acceptable platform for union or fellowship even with fellow Lutherans. So the cultural and ethnic isolation of the Synod in the early years of its second period was compounded by a conservative brand of theological exclusiveness.

Emphasis on doctrinal unity, the ethnic background of its membership, and a strong Lutheran consciousness, generally kept out liberalizing tendencies at precisely the time they were making great inroads in other branches of Protestantism.[56] "Fundamentalism

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[55]William Dallman, William H. T. Dau and Theodore Engelder, eds., Walther and the Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), pp. 122-128.

[56]Winthrop S. Hudson, American Protestantism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 143-153.

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arose and flourished in those denominations that had been invaded but not conquered by liberalism--the Baptists in the South and Presbyterians in the North. If Liberalist invasion was the challenge to which conservative churchmen responded--in Fundamentalism,"[57] then Missouri Synod Lutheranism was safe from Fundamentalism as well. While it is true that both Missouri and Fundamentalism shared an exalted view of the nature and authority of Scripture, conservative Lutheranism's reliance on the sixteenth century confessional writings, the writings of Luther and later Lutheran theologians as expositions of Scripture created a gulf between the two groups.[58] These the Fundamentalists did not accept. Nevertheless, there was much about Fundamentalism that Synodical leaders appreciated, most notably its struggle with the new theology:

> While we do not fellowship or make common cause with the seats around us, we are not isolated from them. Inasmuch as the essence of the Gospel is still being preached in their midst, there will be Christians among them, with whom we are united in the one invisible church of Christ. And inasmuch as they are struggling to retain that measure of truth which they possess our sincerest sympathies are with them.[59]

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[57] Rudnick, op. cit., p. 82.

[58] Ibid., p. 73.

[59] [Theodore Graebner], "New Theology and Higher Criticism," Lutheran Witness, XLI (September 12, 1922), 295. Quoted in Rudnick, op. cit., p. 77.

It is safe to assume that certain elements of Fundamentalism left their imprint on individual clergy and laymen in the Missouri Synod. This was due to several factors which do not lend themselves to easy measurement. Sympathy for the Fundamentalist cause has already been mentioned. A second factor was the use of Fundamentalist literature during the difficult days of transition from the German to English language, a period when there was a scarcity of Lutheran literature in English. A third was the tremendous impact of the founder of the Lutheran Hour radio program and Concordia Seminary professor, Walter A. Maier. His emphasis on the fundamentals of the Christian faith were reflected in the pulpits of his former students, as well as in his widely broadcast sermons.[60]

It is in this "second period" that the question of the "inerrancy of Scripture" began to appear regularly in the literature of Synod. The emphasis on "inerrancy" in Synodical publications during this time is of great significance for the future history of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. To some observers, it demonstrates Fundamentalist influence and marks a departure from Luther's understanding of Scripture:

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[60] Ibid., p. 113.

"Luther teaches that belief in Scripture is belief in Christ. For Fundamentalists belief in Christ is belief in the Bible."[61]

German Lutheran theologian Hermann Sasse detects a subtle shift in Missouri from Luther's view to that of the Fundamentalists: "A change has taken place, a shift of emphasis from Christ to the Bible. This becomes clear when one studies the writings of the Fundamentalists and of conservative Lutherans in America who have been influenced by them. For this has happened in the literature of the Missouri Synod."[62] Sasse maintains that Walther and the early Missourians simply continued the orthodox doctrine of inspiration. He accuses the second period theologians, Franz Pieper, Theodore Engelder, Paul E. Kretzmann and William Arndt, of falling under the influence of a Fundamentalist view of Scripture: "This appears even in their quotations from the Bible. Their use of John 10:35 [Scripture cannot be broken--this is even the title of a book by Engelder] as proof of inerrancy seems to have been unknown to older generations."[63]

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[61]Hermann Sasse, "Luther and the Word of God," Accents in Luther's Theology: Essays in commemoration of the 450th anniversary of the Reformation, edited by Heino O. Kadai (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), p. 82.

[62]Ibid. [63]Ibid., p. 83.

However, in the same generation, the various Lutheran bodies in the United States showed phenomenal growth, better than doubling their membership by the mid-1930's.[64] Along with the growth factor, the unifying influence of Americanization began to exert itself on these groups. The children and grandchildren of German and Scandinavian immigrants became increasingly unfamiliar with the language and ethnic orientation of their particular brand of Lutheranism.

The United Lutheran Church came into being in 1917, after several years of joint work on an English language Common Service Book. This group was composed of The General Synod, The United Synod of the South, and The General Council. Significantly, these were the oldest Lutheran groups in the country.[65] 1917 also saw the formation of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, later simply the Evangelical Lutheran Church. This group, at the time of its origin, comprised over ninety percent of Lutherans of Norwegian descent in the United

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[64] Yearbook of American Churches (New York: National Council of Churches of Christ, 1957), pp. 254-256.

[65] Luther D. Reed, The Lutheran Liturgy. A Study of the Common Service of the Lutheran Church in America (Philadelphia: Monthly Press, 1947), pp. 180-216.

States.[66] In 1930, after much preparatory work, the Ohio Synod, the Iowa Synod and the Buffalo Synod merged to form the American Lutheran Church.[67] Lutheranism in the United States began to adapt itself to the broader outlook of old-line American Protestantism in other ways as well. In order for the Church to address itself more effectively to the problems of a changing world and society, cooperative groups began to appear during and immediately after the First World War. In 1917, in order to more effectively minister to members of the Armed Forces, a National Lutheran Commission was organized representing thirteen Lutheran bodies. The Missouri Synod did not cooperate. However, Synod unofficially tried to coordinate its Armed Services work with the Commission. Following the war, the Lutheran Commission attempted to continue its work as the National Lutheran Council. The Council eventually embraced approximately two-thirds of all American and Canadian Lutherans. Once again, Missouri did not join.[68]

The legal basis for the attitude of non-cooperation

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[66] E. Clifford Nelson, The Lutheran Church among Norwegian Americans (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1960), II, 183 ff. Cf. Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955), pp. 272-278.

[67] Wentz, op. cit., pp. 272-278.

[68] Ibid., pp. 302-315, 338-344.

is found in the Synodical Constitution, Article VI:2. In describing conditions for acquiring and holding membership in Synod, the article demands "Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description." This is explained as applying to ministers serving congregations of mixed confession, taking part in heterodox tract and mission activities.[69]

The doctrine of "unionism" in the Missouri Synod has been indicated as follows: there can be no doctrinal disagreement between Missouri and those who would seek fellowship with her; there can be no "open questions" between Missouri and those who seek fellowship or cooperation.[70]

What has been called "the awe-inspiring strictness of this doctrine" has its roots in the circumstances of Missouri's founding. The Saxon founders had left Germany in response to what they thought was encroaching Rationalism and the attempts by the government to force organic union with the Reformed German Churches.[71] Another force contributing to the harsh

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[69] Handbook, p. 17.

[70] Supra, p. 27, n. 54.

[71] Baepler, op. cit., p. 11 ff. Cf. Conrad Bergendorff, The Church of the Lutheran Reformation (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), pp. 206-207.

fellowship doctrine was the increasing spirit of Biblical literalism which had its start early in Synodical history. As has been indicated, this spirit received fresh impetus on the sidelines of the Modernist-Fundamentalist controversy. This literature tended to fix itself on Romans 16:17: "Now I beseech you Brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offense contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."[72] The precise meaning of this verse would later be a matter of much dispute.

> The traditional doctrine of unionism was like a secure fortress from which Missouri's leaders would occasionally sally forth to battle or to parlay. With those bodies which were like-minded, Missouri was always willing to seek agreement. ... The Missouri Synod was a major influence in the founding of the conservative Synodical conference. Missouri also confidently attacked other Lutheran bodies with whom it was not in complete doctrinal agreement. Usually these attacks were on basis of doctrinal difference, such as predestination. Occasionally, Missouri spoke against another church's practice concerning for instance, church discipline or lodge practice.[73]

The extent of Missouri Synod separation is a

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[72]John W. Hattery, "The Historical Development of the Doctrine of Unionism of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XLIII, 4 (November, 1970), 179-181.

[73]Ibid. Cf. Friederich Bente, Was Steht der Vereinigung der Lutherischen Synoden in Wege? (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1917), passim.

matter of some dispute. There were attempts made by Walther and his colleagues in the first period of Synodical history to draw together the Lutherans in America on a confessional basis. They tried to achieve this in accord with the pattern of colloquies held in Germany in the decades following the Reformation. Colloquies were held between members of the Missouri Synod and members of the Buffalo Synod at Buffalo, New York, as early as 1866. Another was held with the Iowa Synod in Milwaukee in 1867. Interestingly, these were opened and closed with liturgical services, a practice that would later be viewed as unionistic.[74]

"Free conferences," another time-honored Lutheran technique employed for doctrinal discussion among Lutheran groups who "subscribed to the Augsburg Confession without reservation," were held each year, from 1856 through 1859. All of these were opened and closed with liturgical services. These conferences did not succeed in producing unity, but they were instrumental in bringing about the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America in 1872.[75]

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[74]"The Theology of Fellowship," a supplement to the report of the Committee on Theology and Church Relations, in Proceedings of the 46th Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, 1965, p. 280.

[75]Ibid.

The Synodical Conference, comprising the Missouri, Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods, was not a merger, but in the main an advisory body of conservative Confessional Lutherans. Its ultimate aim was the organic union of American Lutherans. It was recognized from the outset that organic unity was in the distant future because of various doctrinal disagreements on matters such as election, predestination and conversion.[76]

In order to effect the desired organic union, the Synodical conference members and other Lutheran bodies followed the practice of adopting theses and statements spelling out their doctrinal position. This practice continued into the second period of Missouri's history.

In 1917, a colloquy was begun involving the Buffalo, Iowa, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin Synods. As a result, the Chicago Theses on Conversion, Predestination and Other Matters were adopted by the Synodical representatives in 1925.[77] Aside from dealing with the controverted doctrines, the Chicago Theses were: (1) to express the doctrinal harmony which existed between the Synods and (2) to bring about the exercise of fellowship between the bodies concerned. Only

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[76] Concordia Cyclopedia, pp. 1030 ff.

[77] Ibid., p. 193.

the Buffalo Synod accepted these Theses.[78] Missouri rejected them as a basis for fellowship in 1929.[79]

The Missouri Synod Convention of 1929 recommended the formation of a committee to draw up a statement of the Synod's doctrinal position which would serve as a basis of fellowship and union. The committee, consisting of Franz Pieper, Walter Wegner, Lawrence Heerboth and Theodore Engelder, in 1931 produced The Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod. It was adopted by the Synod at its convention in 1932.[80] This strongly conservative and literalistic document would, in the future, raise some serious questions emanating from the lack of a constitutional definition as to the status of a Synodically adopted doctrinal statement.[81]

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[78]Erwin L. Lueker, "Functions of Symbols and Doctrinal Statements," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXII (May, 1961), 5, 274-285.

[79]Ibid. [80]Ibid.

[81]Introductory paragraphs of the Brief Statement are appended as Appendix I of this study.

CHAPTER II

THE THIRD PERIOD: CRYSTALLIZATION OF THE ISSUES

By the third decade of the twentieth century the process of Americanization was well underway in the various Lutheran churches. Language barriers were rapidly falling, ethnic units were dissolving, and with these developments came an increasing exposure to the problems and possibilities of the wider community. These developments were reflected in American Lutheranism, as well as other Protestant groups, by an increasing interest in the prospect of larger, merged church units.[1] Regarding this era, A. R. Wentz says there seemed to be "a new spiritual atmosphere, highly charged with possibilities, spread over the earth calling the Christian church to unimagined opportunities, demanding larger units of organization."[2]

This movement toward larger church units has already been seen in the organization of the United

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[1]Kenneth Scott Latourette, Christianity in a Revolutionary Age (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1962), V: The Twentieth Century Outside Europe, pp. 52-54.

[2]Wentz, op. cit., pp. 241 ff.

Lutheran Church in America in 1918 and again in 1930, in the organization of the Ohio, Iowa and Buffalo Synods as the American Lutheran Church. It is this latter group with which the Missouri Synod hoped to create a close working relationship.

The movement towards Lutheran unity in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod was by no means new. From its foundation Synod had striven for precisely that. The very organization of Synod had been the result of this drive. In 1872 the formation of the Synodical Conference had been a further step in this direction. But in all such cases, confessional and doctrinal agreements were deemed absolutely necessary to the establishment of fellowship.

Walther had recognized that Christians are to be found in all churches bearing the name of Christ.[3] This same feeling was expressed more often during the latter stage of Missouri's second period and on into the third period: "The Lutheran Church is not the only church in which there are Christians. There are many good and genuine Christians also in other churches."[4] And again, "Every Christian, no matter what his

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[3] Supra, pp. 13-14.

[4] Martin S. Sommer, "Christians in other Churches," Lutheran Witness, XXXIX (March 16, 1920), 83, 84.

denominational affiliation, has fellowship in the 'entire Christ.' ... The intimate fellowship is also clearly portrayed in the Scriptural use of the term ecclesia, which denotes the number of believers, either as they are scattered throughout the world or as they are found in a particular place."[5]

Nevertheless, the leading theologians in the Synod always took pains to make it perfectly clear that any moves toward union and fellowship meant uniform adherence to the Word in all of its aspects. Unity in the sense of "after all, we are all Christians," was not to be confused with organizational unity. To have organizational union, so it was maintained, required unity in confession. Theodore Graebner in the Lutheran Witness, the official synodical organ, expressed his views in an editorial:

> The Lutherans of America will not permit themselves to be driven by emotional currents into premature union even among those who bear the name Lutheran. It is part of the message of Lutherans to America today to distinguish between Christian unity and church union, between the communion of saints and the corporation of saints. The church is not an organization but an organism.[6]

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[5]F. E. Mayer, "The New Testament Concept of Fellowship," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXII (September, 1952), 636.

[6]Theodore Graebner, "The Corporation of the Saints," The Lutheran Witness, LXI (April 14, 1942), 131.

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In an earlier editorial, Graebner explained clearly the grounds for Missouri's extremely guarded attitude towards fellow Lutherans:

> What separates us [Lutherans] is especially the difference in our views regarding the meaning of confessional subscription. There are Lutherans who hold that the acceptance of the Lutheran confessions must govern practice; this is the attitude of the Missouri Synod, for one. And there are bodies that do not believe that acceptance of the confessions need govern practice. ... There is only one way to Lutheran unity--the elimination of differences in doctrine and practice.[7]

This is the type of theological presupposition that formed the background to the Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod of 1932.

The Brief Statement is an authoritative statement of the Synod which was to form the basis for doctrinal discussions of unity and fellowship. It covers the primary facets of the Christian faith with special attention given to doctrines of election, conversion, the church and verbal inspiration of the Bible.[8]

Of the forty-eight paragraphs comprising The Brief Statement, several need particular attention in this study because they will be clearly objectionable to certain groups in the Synod. Paragraphs 1-3 deal

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[7]Theodore Graebner, "Lutheran Union," The Lutheran Witness, XLII (August 14, 1923), 263.

[8]Appendix I.

with the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures. Along with the usual statements pertaining to the divine authorship, they specifically mention that Scripture is completely accurate "also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical and other secular matters."[9] Furthermore, Scripture is to be understood on its own terms: "The rule of faith is not the man-made so-called 'totality of Scripture.'"[10] This is an attack on Biblical criticism of whatever character and clearly goes beyond Luther and the historic Lutheran confessions. According to some scholars, such as Martin Marty,

> Luther thought of himself as being "under" the Word--by which he meant subject not simply to Christ the Word, but also to the Scriptures as a witness. While his own rather free "divining" of Scripture implied an attitude which would never have fit the reformed or seventeenth-century Lutheran strait-jacketing of the Bible in theories of verbal inerrancy (Luther was not above correcting Paul or John here and there, and his criticism of the Epistle of James is well-known), he had a reverent attitude to the totality of the book.[11]

It should, of course, be noted that the nature of

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[9] Ibid., Paragraph I.

[10] Ibid., Paragraph 2.

[11] Martin E. Marty, A Short History of Christianity (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1959), p. 217. Cf. Sasse, supra, p. 31.

Scripture was never in dispute between Luther and Rome. The Brief Statement holds that the possibility of human error in Scripture was to be viewed as "horrible and blasphemous," since it would then permit scholars and others to sit in judgment over the word, and thus be in a position to destroy the foundations of the church and faith.[12] These three paragraphs are worthy of special attention because they form the most concise and generally accepted statement of what conservative Missourians mean when they speak of the crucial doctrine of "inerrancy."

Paragraphs twenty-eight and twenty-nine deal with the question of church fellowship and the related problem of what constitutes orthodoxy. Unionism is repudiated as being "disobedience to God's command, as causing divisions in the church ... and as involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely."[13] The following statement is simply a documentary pronouncement of the attitude already noted in Graebner's editorial:

> The orthodox character of a church is established not by its mere name nor by its outward acceptance of, and subscription to, an orthodox creed but by the doctrine which

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[12] See Appendix I, Paragraph 3.

[13] Ibid., Paragraph 28.

> is actually taught in its pulpits, in its theological seminaries, and in its publications ... a church does not forfeit its orthodox character through the casual intrusion of errors, provided these are combated and eventually removed by means of doctrinal discipline.[14]

Hence, it is mandatory that an orthodox church body would always be on the alert for the intrusion of false teaching, even if its official statements remained entirely in accord with Scripture and the historic confessions. These paragraphs will later be the source of much dispute. The group considering itself "conservative-evangelical" will tend to demand investigations and disciplinary actions in their own synod and in church groups not organically linked with Missouri. The "moderate-evangelicals" will deplore the lack of "openness and trust" and polemics that this spirit seems to foster.

One other significant paragraph in The Brief Statement deals with the Symbols of the Lutheran Church, and the binding nature of historic statements of doctrinal position. Paragraph forty-eight says:

> The confessional obligation covers all doctrines, not only those which are treated ex professo, but also those that are merely introduced in support of other doctrines. The obligation does not extend to historical statements, "purely exegetical questions" and other matters not belonging to the

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[14] Ibid., Paragraph 29.

> doctrinal content of the Symbols. All doctrines of the Symbols are based on clear statements of Scripture.[15]

Paragraph forty-eight thus seems to do two things. First, it apparently gives a very broad definition of what constitutes a confessional doctrine. Second, it declines to make historical doctrinal statements like The Brief Statement itself obligatory or authoritative in a binding sense.

The net effect of The Brief Statement is significant. It is clearly a strongly conservative document. In large measure, the recent problems confronting the Synod can be categorized, and the opposing forces understood, on the basis of their relationship to this 1932 declaration of doctrinal position. The Reverend Omar Stuenkel, formerly an editor of the official synodical publication, The Lutheran Witness, summarizes the moderate position as it has emerged in recent times: "But in Bible-oriented churches like the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, much of the struggle relates to questions of authority. Some take a rigid and static view of the Bible which becomes literalistic, dogmatic and judgemental. I believe they endanger the church at a crucial point."[16] The other side,

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[15] Ibid., Paragraph 48.

[16] Omar Stuenkel, "Here the Moderates Stand," Christian Herald, XCIII, 1 (January, 1971), 18.

represented by the Reverend Waldo Werning, Stewardship Secretary of the South Wisconsin District of the Synod, states the conservative position:

> As the confessions do battle for true doctrines for the Gospels' sake, so the [Missouri Synod] without becoming biblicist or fundamentalist, holds solemnly to an infallible, written Word. If we violate any part of the Word, we violate the Gospel. ... Therefore we hold to a miraculous inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible rather than an historically conditioned book with only temporary validity. With the confessors, we believe that divinely revealed truth can be articulated in correct formulations.[17]

This is a call to loyalty to the spirit, if not the letter, of The Brief Statement. Both sides in the growing dispute pledge loyalty to Scripture and Confessions. The heart of the matter is to be found in the problem surrounding the meaning of the term "inerrancy of Scripture" which is implied in The Brief Statement. Whatever the immediate problem at issue, Biblical criticism, teaching in synodical schools, the church and socio-political action, faculty study essays, church fellowship or parish education materials, all have the same common denominator. Is Scripture treated as being inerrant in all matters, and what does inerrancy mean?

Between 1932 and 1935, the Synodical Conference

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[17]Waldo Werning, "Here the Conservatives Stand," p. 19.

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discussed the possibility of organic union.[18] The possible merger did not take place because of language problems among the German, Norwegian and Slovak membership of the conference and because some members thought organic union to be superfluous.[19]

In 1934, negotiating committees of the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church began a new series of doctrinal discussions looking toward fellowship. Now the discussions were based on The Brief Statement. It was agreed by both groups to accept The Brief Statement. However, the American Lutherans issued a "Declaration" clarifying their position on points such as the Scriptures, predestination and eschatology which they thought were a bit unclear in The Brief Statement.[20]

Missouri's committee on Lutheran Church Union at this time was made up of strongly conservative men such as Drs. William Arndt, Theodore Engelder and Carl Brommer. The committee reported that "in some non-

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[18] Proceedings of the Thirty-sixth Regular Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States, Cleveland, Ohio, 1935 (St. Louis, 1935), p. 219. Report of the Committee on Organic Union.

[19] Ibid. Report of Committee 21.

[20] Official Minutes, Fifth Convention of the American Lutheran Church, Sandusky, Ohio, 1938 (Columbus, Ohio, n.d.), pp. 7-11.

fundamental points concerning the doctrine of the last things, the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church asks tolerance for certain teachings and interpretations which have been rejected in our circles."[21] The committee recommendation that The Brief Statement and the "Declaration" be regarded as a basis for "future fellowship" was adopted by Synod.[22] Thus, fellowship was to be delayed until full agreement was reached in all matters. Furthermore, the American Lutheran Church was to secure the approval of those groups with which it was in fellowship, while Missouri was to do the same with members of the Synodical Conference.[23] Thus, the St. Louis Convention, while accepting documented statements considered necessary for fellowship, took steps to delay their implementation. This represented a triumph of sorts for the ultra-conservative wing of Synod. In 1947, Missouri rescinded the resolutions completely, instructing its committee on Doctrinal Unity "to make every effort to arrive at one document which is Scriptural, clear, concise and unequivocal."[24]

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[21] Proceedings of the Thirty Seventh Regular Convention (St. Louis, 1938), pp. 231-233.

[22] Ibid. [23] Ibid.

[24] Proceedings of the Fortieth Regular Convention, Chicago, Illinois, 1947 (St. Louis, 1947), p. 510.

The two groups did continue working toward the development of one document and produced "The Common Confession," Part One, in 1950, Part Two in 1952.[25] The American Lutheran Church adopted the Common Confession in 1950, as did Missouri in the same year.[26] However, in the case of Missouri, because of extreme conservative agitation, it was determined not to accept it as a basis for immediate fellowship. Instead, there was a call for further statements of doctrinal position. No loopholes were to be left open. Furthermore, the Missourians thought it absolutely necessary that, in some way, they be assured that practice would conform to any eventual theological settlement.[27]

Despite the faltering steps toward full fellowship with the American Lutheran Church, it became increasingly apparent that the Missouri Synod was in fact moving slowly towards the broader theological view of her fellow Lutherans. At the Saginaw Convention in 1944, the following statement was adopted concerning prayer fellowship:

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[25] R. C. Wolf, ed., Documents of Lutheran Unity in America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), Document #167, "The Common Confession," 1949, 1952, pp. 408-428.

[26] Wentz, op. cit., pp. 353-355.

[27] Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1956, p. 505.

> Joint prayer at intersynodical conferences, asking God for guidance and blessing, does not militate against the resolution [that fellowship with the A.L.C. had not been reached], provided such prayer does not imply denial of the truth or support of error. Local conditions will determine the advisability of such prayer. Above all, the conscience of a brother must not be violated."[28]

In 1953, the fellowing resolution was passed: "That Synod declares that it does not consider Joint Prayer at intersynodical meetings unionistic and sinful."[29]

Inconsequential at first glance, this move marked a turning point in the official Synod position regarding fellowship of any type. At the same time it brought a storm of criticism from the more conservative members of Synod, along with protests and threats from members of the Synodical Conference.

In 1955, the Wisconsin Synod issued a protest against Missouri's "Unionistic Practices." Among these practices, Wisconsin named the following: "The Common Confession, joint prayer, scouting, chaplaincy, communion agreement with the National Lutheran Council, cooperation with unorthodox churches in matters clearly not in the field of externals."[30] Following this enumeration was a resolution threatening termination of

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[28]Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1944, pp. 251-252.

[29]Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1953, p. 552.

[30]Wolf, op. cit., pp. 430-432.

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fellowship in 1956 on the basis of Romans 16:17-18, should the situation remain unchanged.

In the same year (1955), the Norwegian Synod, now the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, did suspend fellowship with Missouri for the same reasons.[31] The statement by the Norwegians is both interesting and significant for its attempt to capitalize on the dissension in the Missouri Synod. Following something of a divide-and-conquer technique, the resolution suspending fellowship closes with these words:

> It is our firm conviction that we and those who stand with us represent the Scriptural principles and spirit of the Synodical Conference, and that it is the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod which has departed from them. ... We hereby declare our desire to maintain fraternal relations with those synods, congregations, and individuals who are of one mind and spirit with us in matters of Christian doctrine and practice.[32]

This amounted to an attempt to create internal division in the Missouri Synod. It is of some significance to note that the future President of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Jacob A. O. Preus, was a member of the Norwegian Lutheran Church at this time and a leader in seeking suspension of fellowship with Missouri.

Within the Missouri Synod itself, there were

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[31] Ibid., pp. 432-435.

[32] Ibid.

unmistakable signs of growing dissidence during the early days of this third period of its history. The most common form of protest was the establishment of various publications and new synods purporting to be the voices of authentic, confessional Lutheranism. One of the earliest of the publications was The Confessional Lutheran (edited by Paul Burgdorf), whose first number appeared in 1940. It immediately hit hard on all the controversial doctrinal issues of the time.

Its chief goal for eight years was the prevention of merger with the A.L.C. On the question of fellowship it said: "The Bible does not demand that all Christians should belong to one congregation or even to one church body. But God does demand that all churches should teach absolutely alike in all points of every doctrine. ... He will hold you and me eternally responsible if, through fault of ours, that unity does not exist."[33] The periodical went on to deal with three possible objections to its conservative stand. To the objection that there were Christians in all churches, it answered that while that was true, the thing that made Lutheranism authentic was its adherence to every Biblical doctrine. To the complaint that its

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[33]Confessional Lutheran, I, 1 (January, 1940), 1, 2.

stand was uncharitable, the periodical replied that God had laid down the rules for fellowship, not The Confessional Lutheran. To the accusation that it was promoting strife and disunity, it declared that peace and fellowship cannot Scripturally be bought at the price of surrender.[34]

In stating its position on prayer fellowship, The Confessional Lutheran sadly noted the shift in Synod's position by comparing Graebner's writings of 1920 with those of more recent times. In 1920 he had written: "Joint prayers presume Christian fellowship. If joint prayer signifies anything, it signifies the spiritual unity of those who pray."[35] The Confessional Lutheran then quoted from Graebner's current writings:

> Unless the element of offense enters in, the principle must prevail that the New Testament contains no prohibitions of the uttering of a Christian prayer at any time or in any place. In other words, outside the element of offense, we must demand proof for his position, not of him who prays, but of him who forbids a Christian to pray to his God.[36]

After bewailing this apparent shift in the attitude of Synod and its leaders, The Confessional Lutheran

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[34]F. W. C. Jesse, "Church Unity," The Confessional Lutheran, VIII (January, 1946), 1.

[35]Ibid., pp. 2-4.

[36]Theodore Graebner, "Prayer Fellowship," Homiletics Magazine, 44 (n.d.), 231.

expounded at great length how all of this was forbidden by Romans 16:17-18, and further was a departure from the historic Lutheran position, particularly as it is set forth in The Brief Statement.[37]

In September, 1951, a new synod was organized in Minnesota, taking the name Orthodox Lutheran Conference. Sixteen pastors who attended the constituting meeting as well as "numerous guests in the person of pastors from the Wisconsin and Norwegian Synods"[38] subscribed to a new "Confession of Faith." At least one eminent Lutheran clergyman was listed among its officers--Dr. Paul E. Kretzmann, former professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.[39]

The "Articles of Agreement" of this dissident group gave the following justification for the new organization:

> Whereas, the theology of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has shown a progressive deterioration and unscriptural character for the past two decades in many articles appearing in the Lutheran Witness, the Concordia Theological Monthly, as well as in published pamphlets ... as well as in the Common Confession; Whereas, some of the Missouri Synod's leading

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[37]Graebner, quoted by Theodore Dierks in "The Doctrine of the Church," The Confessional Lutheran, VII (February, 1946), 17.

[38]Ibid., pp. 22-23. Cf. Appendix I, Par. 28-29.

[39]The Orthodox Lutheran, I, 1 (November, 1951), 1-5.

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> theologians and clergymen have repeatedly become guilty of flagrant unionistic practices (see Memorials 603 to 622, 625 to 630, submitted to the Milwaukee convention of 1950)

it was resolved that Missouri was beyond hope of cleansing and therefore withdrawal was necessary for orthodox Lutherans.[40]

The Orthodox Lutheran, voice of the new Synod, was again primarily directed against Missouri (one article gave an account of a fist fight between two Missouri Synod pastors who were guilty of "gangsterism" in trying to remove two orthodox Conference men in a dispute over property rights).[41] The chief complaints against the Missouri Synod may be summarized as "permitting rampant unionism" in addition to "hierarchical tyranny."[42] These accusations were interpreted with overt attempts to encourage others to leave Missouri because of its doctrinal degeneration and leave Wisconsin because it had not yet severed its ties with Missouri.[43]

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[40] "Articles of Agreement," The Orthodox Lutheran, I, 1 (November, 1951), p. 2.

[41] The Orthodox Lutheran, II, 2 (December, 1952), 21 ff.

[42] Ibid., I, 6 (April, 1952), 76 f.; I, 7 (May, 1952), 84 ff.

[43] Ibid., VIII, 4 (April, 1959), 59 f.; VIII, 6 (June, 1959), 94 ff.

The Orthodox Lutheran Theologian, edited by the faculty of the Orthodox Lutheran Seminary in Minneapolis, began publication in January, 1953.[44] This seminary had been opened in the fall of 1952 with Dr. Kretzmann as its president and the Rev. William H. McLaughlin, S.T.M., as its only other faculty member. In April, 1953, it was reported that the seminary had seven students.[44] It ceased operation in 1959.

The Orthodox Lutheran Theologian was, in its own words, launched "in the interest of the full truth of the Word of God" to fulfill the "need of presenting testimony against aberrations in the Lutheran Churches of America." It contained the same type of polemics already noted in The Conservative Lutheran but included a wider range of topics, most notably the Revised Standard version of the Bible.[46]

Another periodical published by this organization, with a somewhat different tone, was The Conservative Lutheran Defender, first published in October, 1959. Once again Paul E. Kretzmann was listed as editor.[47]

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[44] Ibid., I, 12 (October, 1952), 167 ff.

[45] Ibid., II, 6 (April, 1953), 92.

[46] Orthodox Lutheran Theologian, I, 1 (January, 1953), p. 1.

[47] Conservative Lutheran Defender, I, 1 (October, 1959), p. 1.

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This publication carried little in the way of polemical writing, but rather primarily historical and doctrinal articles, along with translations of Walther, Luther and exegetical essays.

These periodicals and organizations typified a particular type of reaction to stirrings within the Missouri Synod. Although some of them were the actions of people who had officially withdrawn from Synod, they nevertheless spoke the fears and misgivings of many who remained within Missouri's fold. This spirit of apprehension over the deterioration of the doctrinal situation was reflected in Missouri's closet Synodical Conference collaborator, the Wisconsin Synod.

It was reported that a group of twenty-four congreations and seventy pastors, teachers and professors, including Professor William Reim, president of Wisconsin's seminary, left the Wisconsin Synod.[48] Another report explained that the schismatics were motivated by the synod's failure to terminate fellowship with Missouri at its 1959 convention. This group organized itself into yet another organization calling itself the Church of the Lutheran Confession.[49]

It is clear that the growth of dissidence within

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[48] Northwestern Lutheran, L, 9 (September 22, 1963), 293.

[49] Lutheran Witness, LXXX, 4 (February 21, 1961), 88.

the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod and in the Synodical Conference was one of that church group's conspicuous marks in the third period of its history. In addition to the unhappiness manifested by those who prided themselves on their conservative orthodoxy, there were an increasing number of high-ranking younger clergy and laymen who believed the Synod had begun to lapse into a cold legalism.

Martin E. Marty, one of Missouri's leading contemporary theologians, assesses the situation this way:

> During and after World War II, the Missouri Synod, no longer isolated by geography, began to carry on a wider ministry in the world. Its members and its leaders gradually came to see the need to carry on Christ's work in company with Christians in other church bodies. They began to move closer to them, beginning with other Lutherans in America. At the same time, the Synod set out to find Scripturally-based ways to serve Christ in the world by facing up to social issues and by taking up the opportunities for service provided by the modern world.[50]

This is an accurate assessment of the fundamental issues. However, problems inherent in modifying synodical positions were not to be easily solved. The moderates' concern over what they perceived as a growing spirit of legalistic lovelessness had been growing for some time.

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[50]Martin E. Marty, "A Layman's Guide to Issues in the Missouri Synod." Mimeographed article in possession of author.

The effect on a pluralistic society of this quality in American Lutheranism was a source of worry and embarrassment to some. One of these, a well known second-generation Missouri Synod clergyman, the Rev. Bernard Hemmeter, expressed his feelings:

> While living in North Carolina, we witnessed the offense given by a divided Lutheranism, when, for example, we could find three Lutheran Churches on three corners of a crossroad, two even bearing the name "St. Stephen." Members would congregate together until the church bells would ring. Then they would go off in three different directions. Occasionally members would transfer from church to church, not due to religious conviction, but because of a marriage, a family feud or some other personal reason. Frequently we asked ourself, "Why must this be?"[51]

This concern, which was widely shared as later events showed, tended to focus on a specific case. This was the case of Dr. Adolph Brux, who served as a synodically sponsored Missionary in Madras, India, from 1923 to 1932.[52] Dr. Brux was recalled from his mission post as a result of some problems with Dr. William Arndt and members of the Synodical Board for Foreign Missions. His difficulties stemmed from his participation in joint prayer with a Presbyterian family in whose home

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[51]Bernard H. Hemmeter, "Reflections on the Missouri Synod," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XLIII (November, 1970), 176.

[52]Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1935, p. 293.

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he stayed.[53] The problem came to a head when, in defense of his action, he published a written exegesis of Romans 16:17. Copies of this defense, entitled "Prayer Fellowship," are not available. However, his conclusions are summarized elsewhere.[54] He concluded that the traditional Missouri interpretation of Romans 16:17-18 was wrong and that Synod's all-encompassing application of the text to other churches was in error and a scandal to the Christian community. When Dr. Brux returned home on furlough he was called on to defend his position before the Mission Board.[55] From 1931 until 1940 the case was routed, re-routed and generally suppressed. The appeals to Synod involving the case strongly suggest unwillingness to face the issues raised by Brux's challenge to its traditions.[56]

A further cause of "moderate" dissatisfaction was

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[53] Ibid.

[54] John W. Hattery, "The Historical Development of the Doctrine of Unionism of the Lutheran Church--Missouri," (abstract of unpublished S.T.M. thesis at Gettysburg Lutheran Seminary [1970]), Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XLIII, 4 (November, 1970), 180.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1935, p. 293. Cf. Proceedings, 1938, Report of Committee 19A on the Brux Re-appeal Case, pp. 317-324. Dr. Brux eventually left synodical service. In 1967, the Synod's New York convention was asked to extend greetings to him on the fiftieth anniversary of his ordination. This it did with a rising vote. Proceedings, 1967, p. 163.

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the obvious unwillingness of the synod to implement the St. Louis resolutions of 1938 that looked toward fellowship with the American Lutheran Church.[57] In 1944, at the Saginaw Convention, Synod declared that "it be understood that no pulpit, altar or prayer-fellowship has been established between us and the American Lutheran Church. ... No action is to be taken by any of our pastors or congregations which ignores the fact that we are not yet united."[58]

It had been the very same St. Louis resolutions that had given birth to the conservative reaction in the form of The Confessional Lutheran, every issue of which contained a call for complete repeal of the resolutions and cessation of fraternal talks with the American Lutheran Church. They were rescinded at the 1947 convention in Chicago.[59] This seeming retreat from moderation, when coupled with the Brux case and rumored cases of Lutheran chaplains being unwilling to serve non-Missourians during World War II, led to a vigorous protest by the moderates in the form of the "Statement of the Forty-four."

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[57]Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1938, pp. 231-233.

[58]Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1944, pp. 251 ff.

[59]Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1947, pp. 377 ff.

On September 6-7, 1945, forty-four clergymen, dissatisfied with affairs in the Missouri Synod, especially since the Saginaw Convention of 1944, met at the Stevens Hotel, Chicago, in order to air their grievances, state their convictions and possibly organize themselves as a voice within Synod.[60]

These "Forty-four," as they came to be known, numbered in their group five professors from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, three of whom held positions on the editorial staff of The Concordia Theological Monthly, the official synodical ministers' journal. Also in the group were the chief editor of The Lutheran Witness, the official synodical publication, members of the staff of the Walther League Messenger, Synod's youth publication, the president of Valparaiso University and the superintendent of the Lutheran Sanitarium at Wheat Ridge, Colorado, a former member of the Seminary faculty. Rounding out the group were several synodical district presidents and pastors of scattered congregations throughout the Missouri Synod.[61]

In view of the prominent positions held by many of these men and their access to synodical communications,

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[60]Paul H. Burgdorf, "The Statementarian Controversy," Confessional Lutheran, VIII (March, 1947), 25.

[61]Appendix II.

conservatives immediately suspected that their purpose was to effect a coup within the Synod.[62]

At the organization meeting of this group, four essays presenting issues basic to the cause espoused by its members were discussed; a document embodying the principles of its activities known as, "A Statement," was drawn up and solemnly subscribed; and a committee known as its "Continuation Committee" was arranged for and entrusted with the carrying on of the group's propaganda.[63]

"A Statement," the document produced by the "Forty-four," seems rather innocuous in light of contemporary synodical disputes; it would in fact be considered relatively orthodox by current conservatives. At the time of its drafting, it was the source of great dispute, charge and countercharge.

Dr. Richard R. Caemmerer, Sr., a participant and faculty member at the St. Louis Seminary, recalls the steps leading to the development of the document:

> At the Chicago meeting Dr. William Arndt presented a paper on the "application of the Law of Love in the Practical Life of the Church," Dr. Otto Paul Kretzmann on "Organization and the Church," Dr. Otto A. Geiseman on "Protest and Appeal" and

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[62]Paul Burgdorf, op. cit.

[63]Ibid.

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> I on "Doctrine and Life and their Application to Synodical Attitudes." The four of us plus five others constituted the drafting committee of "A Statement."[64]

It is interesting to note that one of the essayists and a member of the drafting committee, Dr. William Arndt, had been heavily involved in bringing accusations against Dr. Adolph Brux.[65] Thus this was by no means an arch-liberal group. His presence, along with that of Theodore Graebner, who had written conservatively on the fellowship issue in the past, indicated that change was in the air.

Because there is no precise record of the conversations and discussions of the men who wrote and assented to the "Statement," it is necessary to rely on the integrity of their memories regarding them. Walter E. Bauer, presently Dean Emeritus of the Faculty and Distinguished Service Professor of History at Valparaiso University, and a graduate of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, remembers especially the quality of the men who comprised the "Forty-four."

> Far from being the "radicals" or "liberals" they were called by some of their brethren in the Synod, they impressed me as earnest and dedicated men who loved their church

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[64]Richard R. Caemmerer, Sr., "Recollections of 'A Statement,'" Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XLIII, 4 (November, 1970), p. 157.

[65]Supra, p. 60.

> because of its great tradition of evangelical doctrine and practice, but who were disturbed by what seemed to them increasing evidence of thought and action inconsistent with the best of that tradition."[66]

Bauer further recalls the fact that these men were constantly invoking the name of Luther, Walther and some of the professors of theology most of them had known in classes at the St. Louis Seminary. He himself recalls Franz Pieper expressing his concern with the influence of Reformed-Calvinist literature. Pieper evidently feared contamination of the reine lehre (pure doctrine). This was an apparent concern of the "Forty-four" as well.[67]

Bauer further recalls a discussion centering around the Lutheran emphasis on sola Scriptura:

> Precisely what did this concept include and what did it exclude? It seemed to me that the Word was being defined too narrowly by some and too broadly by others, that there was some misunderstanding of what the founding fathers had actually taught. I was troubled by what seemed to me the emergence of a kind of neo-scholastic or rationalist thought within the Synodical Conference.[68]

It is in this statement that one discovers the basic problem confronting the Synod and that has yet to be

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[66]Walter E. Bauer, "To Recall as Well as I Can," op. cit., pp. 171-173.

[67]Ibid.

[68]Ibid.

solved: What is the nature of the Word? What is the relationship of "the Word" to the words of Scripture?

The other matters such as altar, pulpit and prayer fellowship, the doubts about the evangelical practice in mission fields indicated by the Brux case, problems created by men in the armed forces and chaplaincies, church practices on university campuses--all of these, taken at their root, depended on how the church treated the doctrine of the Word.

Furthermore, these men recognized the impact of forces such as the ethnic breakdown occuring in Synod, the increasing social mobility and urbanization. They also saw that to many people, synodical lines were unimportant and evaporating. They asked whether it was possible that spiritual arrogance was the reason for the insistence on hard and fast lines.[69]

"A Statement" was set up as a series of twelve affirmations in which the Forty-four declared their "unswerving loyalty to" and "faith in" the great Christian-Lutheran traditions and positions as they understood them.[70] Coupled with nine of these affirmations were anti-theses in which certain tendencies in Synod were deplored. Those mentioned were: (1) the tendency

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[69] Ibid.

[70] Appendix II.

to "a narrow legalism;" (2) the tendency to substitute human judgments and synodical resolutions for the authority of Scripture; (3) "man made walls" which hinder the "free course of the Gospel;" (4) manifestations of a "loveless attitude" within Synod; (5) misuse of both Romans 16:17-18 and 1 Thessalonians 5:22 as the basis for separation from fellow Christians; (6) the new and improper emphasis on the synodical organization; (7) tendency to reduce the power of the Gospel to a set of intellectual propositions; (8) the tendency toward deciding prayer fellowship on other than the basis of Scripture; (9) the use of the non-biblical term "unionism."[71]

Upon the completion of the drafting of "A Statement," it was determined that Dr. E. J. Friederich, president of Synod's Colorado District and chairman of the Chicago group, should send a copy of it to every clergyman of the Missouri Synod.[72] Dr. Thomas Coates, one of the signers, defends this somewhat daring action this way: "All of us were convinced--and I have found no reason to change my mind--that this direct approach

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[71] Ibid. See particularly affirmations 1-9.

[72] Thomas Coates, "A Statement--Some Reminiscences," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XLIII, 4 (November, 1970), 161.

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was the most effective way to gain the attention of the entire Synod."[73] In answer to charges that it was improper for unofficial groups to circularize Synod, Coates replied: "In all candor, however, it must be said that the 'Forty-four' felt that it would be futile to direct our document to the official synodical channels. The fear was generally felt that, in such a case, the vast majority of synodical clergymen would never know about 'A Statement' or be confronted with the issues which it raised. Direct action was called for--let the chips fall where they may."[74]

The reaction was swift and unequivocal from the conservative side. The March, 1946, number of The Confessional Lutheran began a series of attacks that was to last for several years: "Recently, 'A Statement,' signed by forty-four men, including five professors of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, was sent to the pastors of the Synod. ... This Statement is not in agreement with Synod's position on unionism."[75]

The following month, The Confessional Lutheran launched its attack on that part of the "Statement" which seemed to be most vulnerable and the same time

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[73] Ibid. [74] Ibid.

[75] Arthur C. Dahms, "Where Do Our Professors Stand Today?" The Confessional Lutheran, VII (March, 1946), 29.

most crucial--the "Statement's" exegesis of Romans 16:17-18. It was maintained that "A Statement's" treatment of this passage, which was basic to the fifth thesis, rejected what the plain words say:[76]

> If our Synod would tolerate this denial of what the plain words of Romans 16:17, 18 say, then it will be forced to give up other passages which warn us against fellowshipping errorists ... since the removal of Romans 16:17, 18 as a text is necessary ... for the false propositions in Thesis VIII and XI, it is very important that the signers of "A Statement" be shown that the exegesis of which supports Thesis V contradicts the plain words.[77]

The Confessional Lutheran article demanded that, should the "Forty-four" refuse to see their error, they would be guilty of the very thing condemned in the disputed passage from Romans. This being the case, it demanded that Synod seek and obtain a retraction and, failing to achieve this, follow the Biblical injunction as to disciplinary action.[78]

In actual fact, moves designed to bring the "Forty-four" to heel were already underway. Coates remembers a series of four meetings of the Pastoral Conferences of the Northern Illinois District which

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[76] Ibid.

[77] A. T. Kretzmann and H. J. Wunderlich, "The Forty-four and Romans 16:17, 18," Confessional Lutheran (April, 1946), p. 43.

[78] Ibid.

were designed to discuss the issues raised by "A Statement," and implicitly to deal with four signers who were members of the Pastoral Conference. The issue of disciplining the four was tabled, that is, effectively killed, by a vote of 55 to 35.[79]

In February, 1946, a plenary session of the College of District Presidents was convened in St. Louis to meet with the "Forty-four." The "Forty-four" held preliminary meetings at the Claridge Hotel, St. Louis, to prepare for the confrontation. Twelve of the members prepared papers, one on each of the twelve theses. The plan was to give these papers a "dry run" before the group and then to present them to the District Presidents at the plenary session.

> The meeting with the presidents, however, proved a fiasco. If memory serves me correctly, there was time to present only the first two of the papers. Discussion from the floor was lengthy (in one case even garrulous), emotional speeches were made, and feelings ran high. The meeting finally "dissolved," with no agreement or accomplishment whatever. It was one of the most dismal episodes in Synodical history.[80]

One positive accomplishment of this meeting was the publication of the twelve essays in booklet form entitled, Speaking the Truth in Love.[81] This little

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[79]Coates, op. cit., p. 162.

[80]Ibid.

[81]Speaking the Truth in Love: Essays Related

booklet most clearly defines the issues of the day as seen by the Forty-four.

For the purposes of the present study the "Foreword" written by the chairman, Dr. E. J. Friedrich, is worth noting. In this introductory statement Dr. Friederich denied that the Forty-four had any intention of becoming a pressure group, that they intended for the "Statement" to be a revolutionary manifesto or that they were attacking individuals or Synod itself. He further denied that the group met to promote unionism, liberalism, or a particular type of fellowship.[82]

Pointing out the fact that the document emphasized "truth" and "love," the chairman noted:

> In the so called "deplorations" of the Statement, we have consciously entered the field of human judgment. Naturally, there may be differences of opinion in regard to the substance. It should be noted, however, that the word "deplore" has a very mild connotation. It does not give expression to an outright condemnation, but simply voices the sentiment that we regret that the things referred to are happening.[83]

One other accomplishment of the February, 1946, meeting was that it asked that further discussions of "A Statement" be held between ten of the "Forty-four"

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to a Statement, Chicago, Nineteen forty-five (Chicago: The Willow Press, [1946]).

[82] Ibid., pp. 7-9. [83] Ibid.

and ten men appointed by the President of Synod, John W. Behnken. By the third meeting of this group, called the "Ten and Ten," it was clear that no progress could be made.[84] In a series of meetings culminating January 6, 1947, an agreement was reached between the Praesidium, the continuation committee, and four signers from the St. Louis faculty. The agreement amounted to outright suppression.[85] The terms were spelled out in a letter from President Behnken to the clergy of the Missouri Synod.[86]

The terms may be briefly summarized as follows: (1) "A Statement" and the accompanying letter were to be withdrawn as a basis of discussion; this was not to be construed as a retraction. (2) The Continuation Committee was to be disbanded. (3) "A Statement" as such was to no longer be promoted by the "Forty-four." (4) Nothing was to be done to push the sale of Speaking the Truth in Love. President Behnken promised the signers that "if any individual or group among the signers of the Statement is attacked on account of evangelical practice, we expect the officers of Synod

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[84] Caemmerer, op. cit., p. 157.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Appendix III.

to come to the defense of the brother or brethren under attack."[87]

This so-called "Agreement" neither satisfied nor silenced the critics from the conservative quarters of the Synod who continued to demand either retraction or discipline of the signers. Suppression was not what they wanted. Edward W. A. Koehler, a leading conservative theologian, and at the time professor of religion at Synod's Concordia Teacher's College, River Forest, Illinois, castigated the "Agreement" in an essay published on February 14, 1947. Critical of the whole procedure outlined by President Behnken, Koehler maintained that the accusations made in "A Statement" had to be answered because of the deeper issues involved.[88]

The issues as he saw them were the "tendencies in our synod," the "loveless attitude in synod," and the "misinterpretation of Romans 16:17, 18." All of this he saw as a brazen attempt at opening the door to selective fellowship and unionism. He concluded his essay with the statement:

> As long as the Statement stands, it will continue to be a barrier between the

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[87] Ibid.

[88] Edward W. A. Koehler, "An Agreement" [River Forest, Illinois, 1947], reprinted in Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, LXIII, 4 (November, 1970), 184-187.

> signers and the rest of us. And its iniquitous leaven will work and continue to work; it will pass from professors to students, from preachers to hearers. Also this leaven must be purged out. If the Statement is not retracted by the signers, it should be rejected by Synod.[89]

These words of Koehler were in large measure an accurate analysis of the situation as it developed. There can be little doubt that a gulf between Missouri Synod "conservative" and "liberal" was there for all to see and that this gulf had been in the making for some time. Furthermore, his assessment of the continued development of liberalizing tendencies in Synod was also probably correct. It is a matter of some dispute as to whether the progression of liberalization was always from seminary to pulpit to layman. It would be rather difficult to demonstrate that the clergy could impose its views on a laity that was in this generation to become more highly educated and increasingly exposed to sophisticated mass communications.

Nevertheless, the fact that change was in the making was recognized early in the dispute by those outside the Synod as well as those within. The Christian Century editorially commented in January, 1946:

> American Lutheranism in all its branches is aroused by a recent development within the ranks of the ultra-conservative

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[89] Ibid.

> Missouri Synod. ... Evidently, there are influential elements in the Missouri Synod which do not intend to allow the isolationism of their communion to pass unchallenged. Last September, forty-four Missouri Synod pastors held a two day conference in Chicago from which came a Manifesto that has been mailed to every minister of the church. These forty-four were what the Quakers would call "weighty" pastors; their words cannot be dismissed lightly. The manifesto which they signed, cast in traditional Lutheran form of twelve theses advanced "in nomine Jesu" has now reached the public.[90]

After giving examples of the "spirit" and "vigor" of the "Statement" theses, The Christian Century summarized the development this way: "The whole manifesto breathes the same ecumenical faith. No wonder The Lutheran Outlook says it brings the Missouri Synod 'to one of the crossroads of destiny.'"[91]

By the time of Synod's centennial convention, some of the heat from the controversy had died down but definitely had not disappeared. In his 1947 triennial report to the Synod, President Behnken briefly reviewed the course of events surrounding the "Forty-four" controversy. His emphasis was on the work done by the Council of District Presidents and his office in obtaining "An Agreement." Nothing in his report

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[90]"Stirrings Within the Missouri Synod," The Christian Century, LXIII, 2 (January 9, 1946), 35.

[91]Ibid., p. 36.

spoke to the specific issues involved.[92]

As a result the convention passed the following resolution:

> Whereas, "A Statement" as such no longer is a basis for discussion according to the "Agreement" reported by the President; and Whereas, the issues raised by a "Statement" are being submitted for study to pastors and congregations on the basis of materials supplied by direction of the President; and Whereas, the subject matter is such as to call for time and patience; ... Therefore be it Resolved, that the President continue to submit to pastors and congregations material for the Scriptural study of the questions at issue.[93]

There matters lay semi-dormant for the next few years, although some useful study documents on prayer fellowship, the meaning of the church, sola Scriptura, and church fellowship were developed in line with President Behnken's recommendation. But, as Dr. Caemmerer remarks, "Many of the techniques against which the signers had inveighed surfaced twenty-five years later."[94]

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[92]Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1947, pp. 15, 16.

[93]Ibid., p. 523.

[94]Caemmerer, op. cit., p. 158.

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CHAPTER III

THE STRUGGLE INTENSIFIES

In assessing the course of events in the history of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Milton Rudnick has this to say: "Since 1945 this church body has been slowly and cautiously changing its interpretation of certain doctrinal points as well as its attitude toward relationships with other Christians."[1] While maintaining that these changes can in no way be construed as "liberalism" in the classical, early twentieth century sense of the term, Rudnick says that they did touch off a "fundamentalist-like reaction" within the Synod. Furthermore, the memory of the classical Fundamentalist-Liberal controversy has intensified the determination of the conservative wing of the Synod to resist change in virtually every form and has to some degree inspired their tactics.[2]

The struggle within Synod between liberals and conservatives, which began to emerge with the 1938 St. Louis convention resolutions and flared into the

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[1] Rudnick, op. cit., p. 115.

[2] Ibid.

open between 1945 and 1947 in the "Forty-four Statementarian Controversy," appeared to be dead for the next several years. But in fact the issues, such as pulpit, altar and prayer fellowship, biblical literalism, unionism, the growing spirit of lovelessness, were all still there fermenting beneath the surface. President Behnken's January 18, 1947, attempt to modify the situation in reality had satisfied neither "liberal" nor "conservative."[3] The "Forty-four" had made no retraction of the points made in "A Statement," nor had conservatives ceased to demand adherence to their views as the only correct position possible in line with the Scriptures, confessions and the Brief Statement of 1932. Reports and Memorials of the centennial convention meeting at Chicago in July, 1947, contain five memorials to Synod asking for a reaffirmation of the Brief Statement as the sole basis for church fellowship of any type.[4] These are followed by five more advocating repeal of the 1938 St. Louis Resolutions, which looked toward fellowship with the American Lutheran Church on the basis of developing one document from the

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[3]Appendix III.

[4]Reports and Memorials, Synodical Centennial Convention, Twenty-fifth Delegate Synod assembled at Chicago, July 20-29, 1947--Fortieth Regular Convention (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 387-393.

Brief Statement and the "Declaration" of the American Lutheran Church.[5] The same collection contains three memorials advocating a greater leniency on matters such as prayer fellowship and Lutheran unity.[6]

The committee of ten appointed by President Behnken to meet with the committee of ten from the "Forty-four" brought in a memorial to Synod advocating a restatement of the fellowship principles of the Brief Statement.[7] Nevertheless, following the convention, nothing had really been settled, although there appeared to be tranquility on the surface. The Brief Statement was reaffirmed, the St. Louis Resolutions were rescinded, and "A Statement" effectively suppressed or, more delicately stated, "withdrawn."[8]

The post-World War II period was one of unprecedented growth in the history of the Lutheran Church --Missouri Synod. In 1940 the synodical membership stood at 1,392,000; in 1945 this figure had risen to 1,533,000; the 1960 figure stood at 2,383,000; by the time of the Denver Convention of 1969 synodical

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[5]Ibid., pp. 393-399.

[6]Ibid., pp. 387, 388, 388-400.

[7]Ibid., pp. 400-402.

[8]Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1947, pp. 476-515. Passim.

membership had reached 2,870,000. These growth figures indicate that the Synod was making strides beyond the normal growth attributable to the increase in population. It had risen from 1.05 percent of the population in 1940 to comprising approximately 1.33 per cent by the 1960's. Coupled with this was a commensurate growth in agencies such as the parochial school system maintained by Synod and its Sunday School program.[9]

Outside observers, such as The Christian Century, took note of this growth. Pointing out that in the last ten years Missouri had erected one thousand new churches and that it expected to build another 1,350 in the next decade, this journal speculated on the possible effects:

> Many, maybe most, of the new members in new churches in new communities come from other denominations with a breadth to their religious lives which the church will have to contain, with ineradicable ecumenical instincts already formed, with no patience for doctrinal untouchability. The evidence in local parishes that this influx is having its effect on the Missouri Synod churches is now inescapable.[10]

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[9] The Statistical Yearbook; Published by the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House). See 1940, 1945, 1960, 1969. Cf. Concordia Cyclopedia, p. 629. Also cf. C. S. Meyer, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

[10] T. A. Gill, "Missouri in Motion," The Christian Century, LXXIII, 29 (July 18, 1956), 845-847.

This editorial was written in direct response to the actions at the St. Paul convention of Synod which had just concluded its session. Pointing to such results of the 1956 convention as a modified view of lodge membership, women's suffrage in the church, and the endorsement of the Boy Scouts, The Christian Century claimed that these were straws in the wind.[11]

The editorial, while correctly analyzing the long term impact of the growth factor, did not mention certain other actions taken at St. Paul and elsewhere that would indicate the strength of entrenched conservatism.

It will be recalled that within the Synodical Conference there had been signs of disaffection on the part of the more rigorously conservative Wisconsin and Norwegian synods. Wisconsin had protested Missouri's trend toward unionism and the Norwegians had suspended fellowship with Missouri over the same issues.[12]

At Chicago, the Synodical Conference outlined steps it thought necessary to check the dissolution of the conference. The Convention Floor Committee on Doctrinal Matters submitted a report that was favorably acted on by the convention.[13] This report called for

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Supra., p. 58.

[13] Proceedings of the Forty-fourth Convention of

a convening of a joint meeting of the Union Committee of the Synods of the Conference. They were then to draw up a list of the problems, defining the status controversiae, express each Synod's position, study them within each Synod, and bring in a report at the 1958 convention of the Synodical Conference. The end result was to be the formulation of a doctrinal statement to serve the Synodical Conference and "conservative" groups in fellowship with the conference.[14]

Also in 1956, at the St. Paul Convention viewed so optimistically by The Christian Century, Missouri took serious steps to mollify conservative unhappiness in the Synodical Conference and in its own ranks as well. The Common Confession, Parts I and II, so laboriously arrived at as a possible basis for fellowship with the American Lutheran Church, was downgraded to the position of "a significant historical statement" and the convention refused to consider it "a functioning union document" for fellowship with the A.L.C. It was still considered harmonious with Scripture, but nothing more.[15]

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the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, Chicago, Illinois, 1956 (St. Louis, 1957), pp. 144-146.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1956, p. 505.

A further resolution was adopted at St. Paul that expressed a spirit of conciliation of the conservatives both in and out of Synod. Resolution 15 in humble tones expressed regret for "any lovelessness or lack of brotherliness" toward members of the Synodical conference with a pledge to set all wrongs right again.[16] Part (H) of this resolution went so far as to say "that we agree not to enter discussions or negotiations with other Lutheran synods without having informed the sister synods of the Synodical conference of our intentions and without having invited and urged them to join with us in these discussions."[17]

This expression of conciliation toward fellow members of the Synodical Conference was only a partial success. Wisconsin temporarily delayed final action on breaking its relationship with Missouri, contenting itself with a resolution "that our fellowship with The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod be one of vigorously protesting fellowship."[18] The Norwegians, on the other hand, while expressing satisfaction that Missouri had

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[16] Ibid., pp. 516-517.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Proceedings, Seventy-eighth Convention, Michigan District, Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, 33rd Convention--Recessed Convention, Watertown, 1956 (n.p., n.d.), pp. 60-61.

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given consideration to the causes of its 1955 suspension of fellowship, felt that more time was needed to check on Missourian orthodoxy. Therefore, they voted to continue the suspended fellowship, although they did modify the suspension to the extent of agreeing to enter discussion aimed at eliminating areas of disagreement.[19]

A "Joint Union Committee" was appointed by the Synodical Conference to carry on the required discussions. The Committee in 1957 enumerated the six doctrinal areas to be studied. They included the following: (1) Scripture-Revelation, Principles of Interpretation; (2) Atonement and Justification; (c) Grace, Conversion, Election; (4) The Dynamic of Christian Life--Scouting; (5) Church and Ministry--Fellowship, Unionism, Separatism, Discipline, Military Chaplaincy; (6) Eschatology--Antichrist. Of all these matters, only a statement on the "Doctrine of the Holy Scripture" was adopted.[20] This adopted statement contained a paragraph which said a good deal about the root of the problem between liberal and conservative, both in

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[19] 39th Regular Convention Report, The Norwegian Synod, Mankato, Minnesota, 1956 (n.p., n.d.), pp. 46-47.

[20] Proceedings of the Forty-fifth Convention of the Lutheran Synodical Conference, Lakewood, Ohio, 1958 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), pp. 40-45.

Synod and in the Synodical Conference: "Because of our human limitations and frailties we find ourselves in disagreement as to the scope and the application of some Scripture truths to specific areas of our corporate and individual Christian life."[21] It was this basic problem that led to the eventual withdrawal of Wisconsin and the Norwegians (then the Evangelical Lutheran Church) from the Synodical Conference in 1963.

A persistent problem within the Missouri Synod directly related to the "disagreements as to the scope and application of some Scripture truths" is that of "open questions." As early as 1854, just seven years after the formation of Synod, the nature of what constituted an "open question" helped to split Missouri from the Iowa Synod. Kenneth Woodward ascribes the controversy "to Luther's fundamental doctrine of salvation by faith alone. ... [Missouri] added a 'high' interpretation of sacred Scripture."[22] He quotes the Iowans as maintaining that "open questions" are those not touching directly on the issue of salvation on which there was no consensus formed by the church.[23]

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Woodward, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

[23] Ibid. Cf. Johannes Deindorfer, Geschichte der Evangelical-Lutheran Synode von Iowa und anderen Staaten (Chicago, 1897), p. 17.

"Missouri denied that there could be such questions, or indeed any development of Christian doctrine at all, 'since all doctrines to be taught by the church are once and for all set down in the Scriptures.'"[24] It is interesting to note that the Iowa Synod had been planted at the behest of Wilhelm Loehe. Baepler contends that Loehe believed that the Lutheran Reformation was not a definitive, but rather a progressive movement:

> In other words, Loehe believed that not all doctrines of Scripture are fixed in the confessions; and, hence, no branch of the Lutheran church can claim to be in possession of the whole truth. Doctrinal competence, indeed should be desired and sought after, but it has not yet been attained; and, hence, within limits, doctrinal differences and various theological tendencies ..., need not stand in the way of fellowship.[25]

Loehe's less rigorous view of "open questions" became the view of the Iowans. The Iowans, it will be recalled, were one of the three constituent bodies which formed the American Lutheran Church in 1930.[26] Missouri's view of "open questions" while clearly more restrictive than Iowa's, never seemed to be a consensus of all clergy within the synod. The generalized

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[24]Woodward, loc. cit.

[25]Baepler, op. cit., pp. 146-147.

[26]Supra, p. 33.

definition of what constitutes an "open question" is given in Synod's Concordia Cyclopedia: "An open question is a point of theology which the Bible has not decided for us, and where liberty of opinion must be permitted."[27] It hardly needs to be emphasized that this definition lends itself to strict or liberal construction as to what Scripture actually says concerning particular controverted points of doctrine.

The Brief Statement of 1932 recognized the threat which the historical-critical method of Scriptural scholarship posed for the Synod. It was assumed that a good deal of dangerous new ideology might well find its way into the church by casting basic teachings into the category of "open questions." To safeguard itself from such an eventuality, the Brief Statement devoted section 44 to "open questions" and a stronger definition of what might not be considered "open" to varying interpretations:

> Those questions in the domain of Christian doctrine may be termed open questions which Scripture answers either not at all or not clearly. Since neither an individual, nor the Church as a whole, is permitted to develop or augment the Christian doctrine, but are rather ordered and commanded by God to continue in the doctrine of the apostles ... open questions must remain open questions--Not to be included in the

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[27] Concordia Cyclopedia, p. 762.

> number of open questions are the following: the doctrine of the church and the Ministry, of Sunday, of Chiliasm, and of antichrist, these doctrines being clearly defined in Scripture.[28]

This is a clear stand against the concept of a developing theology and Loehe's view of a "progressive" Reformation.[29]

From 1932 to 1959 the Brief Statement, while adopted by Synod as its doctrinal position, was not considered binding in the sense that Scripture or the Symbolic Confessions were binding. It was given the status of "historical statement."[30] Therefore, pastors, teachers, and professors of Synod at the time of ordination and installation were constitutionally pledged to be faithful to the Holy Scriptures and the historic Lutheran Confessions contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, with no reference to the Brief Statement.[31]

After years of agitation, conservatives were able to gain what some viewed as a major victory at the Synodical Convention of 1959, held at San Francisco. Resolution 9, presented by Committee Three, explained

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[28]Appendix I, paragraph 44.

[29]Baepler, loc. cit.

[30]Appendix I, paragraph 48.

[31]Handbook of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, 4.19; 4.21; 4.23; pp. 95, 96.

that because of many inquiries as to the binding force of the Brief Statement, and because Article IIc of the Articles of Incorporation of Synod[32] listed supervision of the doctrine, practice and performance of pastors and teachers, it was necessary to bring in a resolution to clarify the situation.

> Resolved: (A) That Synod further clarify its position by re-affirming that every doctrinal statement of a confessional nature adopted by Synod as a true exposition of the Holy Scriptures is to be regarded as public doctrine in Synod; and (B) That Synod's pastors, teachers and professors are held to teach and act in harmony with such statements; and (C) That those who believe that such statements are not satisfactory in part or in their entirety are not to teach contrary to them, but rather are to present their concern to their brethren in the ministry.

This resolution was adopted.[33] Thus, for the time being, the Brief Statement was given confessional force and effective Symbolical status with the historic confessions.

Objections to this coercive action were not long in coming. For example, the Thirty-sixth convention of the Atlantic District, meeting at Bronxville, New York, in June, 1960, raised both theological and constitutional objections to Resolution Nine. Theologically,

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[32] Ibid., Article IIc, p. 11.

[33] Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1959, pp. 191, 192.

they felt that the Resolution went beyond Scriptural teaching in binding them to a statement that many felt dealt with points that might be considered "open questions." In terms of polity, they felt that Resolution Nine required not only fundamental changes in the Synodical Constitution, but also corresponding changes in the constitutions of member congregations of Synod. Furthermore, they indicated that the adoption of Resolution Nine would require a new ordination and installation vow by every pastor, teacher and professor in Synod.[34] The east coast Atlantic District was joined in this protest by the non-geographic English District of Synod, giving the same reasons.[35]

Resolution Nine seemed to further imply that cooperation with other church bodies, including other Lutheran groups, had been dealt a serious blow because of the Missourian stand on doctrinal agreement. That this was a blow to those who looked for a broader approach by the church to the world may be seen in an article written by Dr. Martin H. Scharlemann in the

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[34] Proceedings of the Thirty-sixth Convention of the Atlantic District of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Bronxville, New York, June 27-July 1, 1960 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), pp. 49-52.

[35] "E. D. Brands Brief Statement Action Unconstitutional," The Lutheran Layman, XL (July 1, 1960), 2.

Walther League Messenger, the synod's youth periodical, the month prior to the San Francisco convention:

> As I see it ... our church will have to come to grips with certain issues that have too long been ignored or evaded. The time has come to insist on vigorous theological leadership. ... By this I mean the ability to determine direction in theology and the courage to set a steady course. Today we suffer from the false notion that theology is a static affair and that everything was fully formulated in earlier days of our church's history. It is the task of theology to bring the truths of Scripture to bear on current issues in a contemporary way. For the past few decades men in our church have used much of their individual theological knowhow for purpose of proving that the other chap was wrong. The time for pat answers is long past.[36]

From this point, Scharlemann enumerated what he considered to be some of the more pressing problems that needed vigorous theological solutions. He called for an adequate program of welfare and a deepening of worship experience, because without these the church becomes a church of words. To illustrate this, he pointed to past synodical indifference on issues such as racial integration.[37] Calling for long-range planning and a possible restructuring of synodical administration, he mentioned that because of Synod's structure, it was becoming more distant from its constituency

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[36]Martin H. Scharlemann, "Forward from San Francisco," The Walther League Messenger, XL, 4 (May, 1959), 14.

[37]Ibid.

and thus unresponsive to their real needs.[38]

This last comment was, as time passed, picked up by the people who considered themselves in the "conservative" camp of the Synod, particularly following the Cleveland convention of 1962.[39] They believed that a top-heavy, highly centralized synodical administration no longer expressed the will of "grass roots" members of the church body.

Noting that "this is an age when no church can afford the luxury of going its own way," and that because of the growth of enmity toward the church and the challenge of the unchristianized world, "isolation can only be equated with irresponsibility,"[40] Scharlemann attacked traditional Missouri exclusiveness. He called attention to the "capricious and erratic manner" in which Synod acted toward its sister organizations. Citing the church's position on fellowship, he said that Missouri's relationship was supposed to be governed by doctrinal agreement with the Wisconsin Synod [a reference to Wisconsin's 1955 protest].[41] "The only other church body that ever accepted the Brief

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[38] Ibid., p. 16.

[39] Infra., Chapter III.

[40] Scharlemann, op. cit., p. 17.

[41] Supra., p. 82.

Statement is the American Lutheran Church. But we are not in fellowship with that body despite the fact that the 1938 convention resolved that we were. In subsequent years we again came to doctrinal agreement with the A.L.C."[42]

In analyzing this course of events, Scharlemann told the church's youth the following:

> For all practical purposes we have been playing a game in this area called "raising the ante." In the early twenties we said we wanted agreement on Scripture and Confessions. When this goal was in sight as far as some other Lutheran groups were concerned, we began to insist on doctrinal unity, which includes matters not specifically covered by our Confessions. When such an agreement was worked out in an instance or two we moved the field goal once more insisting on unity in doctrine and practice.[43]

This was the attitude of the liberal of 1959, as he approached the San Francisco convention. To people of this persuasion, the adoption of Resolution Nine of Committee Three was unrealistic and to some slightly ludicrous. As O. P. Kretzmann, President of Valparaiso University and one of the original "Forty-four" signers of "A Statement,"[44] said in an editorial

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[42] Scharlemann, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Supra., pp. 63 ff.

in The Cresset, a periodical edited by Valparaiso's faculty: "One of the dangers of slogan shouting is that sooner or later one is bound to make a bit of an ass of himself."[45] Pointing out that the same convention adopted a resolution warning against "Romanizing tendencies" in Synod, Kretzmann found the authoritarian adherence to the Brief Statement to be ridiculous. He called attention to the fact that to the Lutheran, "Romanization" is not distinctive vestments or liturgy, the Mass or even the veneration of the Blessed Virgin, but what he calls its basic premise, that is, "that there exists within the church an authority which can speak a final and binding interpretation of the Word." Then, in judging the net effect of the resolution, he concluded: "But true unity of spirit can not be legislated. And since we do not think that any element in the Missouri Synod really wants to enforce a legalistic unity upon the church we suspect that this resolution is already a dead letter."[46] However, the fact of the matter is that adherence to the Brief Statement was now mandatory. Looking ahead to the Cleveland Convention of 1962, some conservatives began to memorialize Synod to the effect that all congregation,

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[45]Otto Paul Kretzmann, "Happy Birthday to You," The Cresset, XXII, 9 (September, 1959), 3.

[46]Ibid.

pastors, teachers and officials within the Synod be obliged to sign the Brief Statement.[47]

It was during the period of the later 1950's that the struggle within the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod began to enter a new phase of its development. The decade beginning in 1958-1959 and continuing through the Denver convention of 1969 was one marked by increasing acrimony on both sides. While personal attack and vilification are evident throughout the history of Lutheranism and certainly not unknown in Missouri's past, they tended to take on an increasingly bitter quality as the decade developed. Issues tended to be identified with specific persons and synodical institutions. In Missouri's past history, personalities and institutions generally came under fire as a result of their position on specific questions. In the late 1950's and the 1960's the people, school, bureau or agency seemingly took on an importance that was almost apart from the issue involved.

This phenomenon, which is a commonplace in the political world, was somewhat new to the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod at the time, and posed some

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[47] Reports and Memorials, Forty-fifth Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Cleveland, Ohio, June 20-30, 1962 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), Memorial #306, p. 149.

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problems for a church organization predicated on congregational supremacy and the advisory nature of the Synod.[48] Issues and personalities tended to become confused. Delegates to synodical conventions had the task of decision-making, which was made more difficult by the necessity of separating issue from personality.

As has been indicated in this paper, the issues which confronted the Synod, whether they were church fellowship, unionism, the status of doctrinal statements, the growing legalism and spirit of lovelessness, the right to dissent and others, all had common roots in the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures and the Word.[49] Thus the point at which the struggle began to intensify and at the same time become highly personalized may be fixed at the point in time when serious challenges were issued to a particular conception of this doctrine.

The controversy concerning the nature of Scripture flared into the open in 1958. In February of that year Dr. Scharlemann delivered a paper to the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, entitled, "The Inerrancy of Scripture." The opening lines of this paper, intended for faculty study, reflected the scope of the

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[48] "Constitution of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod," The Handbook of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, 1969, Article 7, pp. 17-18. Cf. Bylaws, 1.09b, p. 28.

[49] Supra. Passim.

problem to be studied and help to explain the violent reaction it caused:

> In this paper I propose to defend the paradox that the Book of God's truth contains errors. What is more, I hope to show that by the proper resolution of this paradox we in fact magnify the truth that comes to us by divine revelation. What is set forth here is necessarily devoted to what is called the human side of that revelation.[50]

Dr. Scharlemann made it clear that he took exception to certain primary ideas contained in the Brief Statement which became binding in the following year at San Francisco:

> You will not misunderstand me when I say that I want to direct myself to that sentence in the first paragraph of the "Brief Statement."[51] ... I entertain the hope that this sentence could not in the wording quoted, pass this faculty today, or, if it did, that the terms "truth," "error," "contradiction," and "historical" would receive very careful limiting adjectives.[52]

From that point, the author goes on to call into question what he believed to be the common understanding of the term "inerrancy," which is a verbal, word-for-word rendering of the text free from the possibility of error or contradiction in all matters. Pointing to the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, Dr. Scharlemann

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[50]Appendix IV, p. 1.

[51]Appendix I, paragraph 1.

[52]Appendix IV.

said: "For that reason, an insistence on 'inerrancy' as that concept is generally understood in our church, does in fact--(1) Make the Bible less than what it proposes to be; (2) Overlooks the use of literary form in the process of revelation; (3) Oversimplifies the whole process of communication."[53] The concluding statement is also worth noting, "We go back to the records to see them in the light of the times in which they were written. If we do this we shall discover that the question of 'inerrancy' is quite out of keeping with the nature of Biblical revelation."[54]

On April 7 and 8, 1959, Dr. Scharlemann read another essay, "The Bible as Record, Witness, and Medium," before the Northern Illinois District Pastoral Conference of the Missouri Synod, in which he enlarged upon the points made in the 1958 paper.[55]

> It was Christ Himself whom God revealed. The revelation did not consist of some teaching or idea about Him but the person of the Messiah. ... [Luther] saw beyond the words and formulations not only of the church but of the Scriptures themselves to God as He revealed Himself in Christ. ... However these previous insights were quickly obscured in the age of Protestant orthodoxy, which chose to fight Roman Catholic theology with weapons forged out of scholastic categories and methods. ...
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> What the sacred writers record ... is

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[53] Ibid. [54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid. Passim.

> God's faithfulness. ... They do so, moreover, from within their own personal limitations in terms of historical, geographical, or scientific information. ...
> The time has come to insist that the word "inerrancy" is inappropriately used of the Scriptures. ...
> Strictly speaking and in a primary sense, the Scriptures are not in themselves a revelation ... but a medium of revelation.[56]

In August, 1959, The Lutheran Quarterly, published within the National Lutheran Council, contained an article by Dr. Scharlemann entitled "God is One." It said in part: "Most certainly David believed that other gods ruled outside of Israel (1 Sam. 26:19). ... Even the first of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:3) seems to suppose the existence of other gods."[57]

On October 20-22, 1959, he read his essay, "Revelation and Inspiration," before the Pastoral Conference of the Western District of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, in which these themes were repeated with a few new formulations: "Now it was a treacherous development that Lutheran theology, instead of developing a doctrine concerning Scripture and its inspiration from Luther's teaching, took over without criticism the ancient Greek view of inspiration, especially that of Augustine as

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[56] Ibid. Passim.

[57] Martin H. Scharlemann, "God is One," Lutheran Quarterly, XI, 3 (August, 1959), 230.

presented by Calvin." And again on the term "inerrancy" he says: "It is dangerous because it is a word that makes sense only in the light of a false view of inspiration--one that got into the church from ancient paganism and has been perpetuated by the Reformed-Fundamentalist tradition. Unhappily, this is how the 'Brief Statement' is usually interpreted."[58]

That this position espoused by the seminary professor would cause a storm of protest can be easily seen. The Confessional Lutheran, an unofficial dissident conservative journal, devoted the better part of two volumes to a critique of both Scharlemann's essays and Scharlemann himself. In November, under the title, "What Missouri Is Really Facing Today," it expressed the feelings of what may be called Brief Statement conservatives:

> Due to a lack of proper evangelical discipline in doctrinal matters over a period of years, the Missouri Synod has today reached a point where it is facing the situation which other Protestant churches faced at the beginning of the present generation and to which Lutheran bodies outside Missouri's affiliation have long since succumbed. The conflict is at present centered in St. Louis. There, among other things, Dr. Martin Scharlemann ... is spearheading a movement to rid the Missouri Synod of the doctrine of the

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[58]Martin H. Scharlemann, "Revelation and Inspiration," State of the Church Book of Documentation--1961 (n.n., n.d.), p. 30.

> inerrancy of Holy Scripture, and, with that, of its Plenary and Verbal Inspiration as confessed by the Missouri Synod e.g. in the Brief Statement.[59]

After enumerating a number of "errors" in Scharlemann's various essays, the periodical said: "Missouri is facing a showdown with out-and-out Modernism in her own midst."[60]

So vigorous were the various protests to the 1958-1959 essays that the president of Concordia Seminary, Dr. Alfred O. Fuerbringer, issued a statement to all the members of the clergy of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod dated February 11, 1960. The statement, signed by Dr. Scharlemann, said that he had never denied the doctrine of inerrancy but had questioned "whether in the light of Biblical evidence available to all of us, 'inerrancy' is really the word we want to use in defining the truth and the utter reliability of the Sacred Scripture."[61] Having said this, the letter quoted Dr. Scharlemann as saying that he was happy to make the statement because the many misrepresentations of his position on the matter, both orally and in print, had had a tendency not so much to damage him but the

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[59]"What the Missouri Synod is Really Facing Today," The Confessional Lutheran, XX, 11 (November, 1959), 109, 110.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Letter from Alfred O. Fuerbringer in possession of the author.

institution which he served by divine call.[62]

This, of course, by no means ended the matter or quelled the disturbances in Synod. For one thing, the claim that Dr. Scharlemann had always accepted the verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture could only mean that he considered his essays in harmony with this doctrine and that the essays were attempts to defend this doctrine. The admission that factual precision was being questioned[63] clearly indicated that he intended to defend the original claim that "God's Book of Truth contains errors." In other words, the term "inerrancy" could no longer mean "absence of factual errors" but something else.

In April, 1960, the Texas District Convention resolved, in the presence of Dr. J. W. Behnken, the Missouri Synod's president, and without any public protest from him:

> That our District, through its officials, repudiate publicly Dr. Scharlemann's attack upon the inerrancy of Holy Scripture--and:
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> That we urge the praesidium of Synod and/or the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis to suspend Dr. Scharlemann from the position of professor at our seminary, pending a thorough

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[62] Ibid.

[63] Scharlemann, "The Inerrancy of Scripture," passim. Cf. the Fuerbringer Letter.

investigation by the proper authorities.[64]

On April 26, 1960, the St. Louis Seminary Faculty issued "A Statement on the Form and Function of the Holy Scriptures."[65] This was an attempt to come to grips with the issues raised by the essays. In part this statement came to the conclusion that "the Scriptures express what God wants them to say and accomplish what God wants them to do. In this sense and in the fulfillment of this function, they are inerrant, infallible, and wholly reliable."[66]

This did not satisfy those already deeply offended by the essays. On the contrary, it merely served to confirm the strong suspicion many conservatives harbored about the faculty of the St. Louis seminary. That suspicion, simply stated, was that the seminary was well on the way to becoming a hotbed of neo-liberal theology and modernism. Scharlemann's essays and the faculty statement were the evidence needed to launch an attack on the men and their theological position.

The Confessional Lutheran protested that even the

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[64]Resolution of the Texas District, April 20, 1960. Published in The Confessional Lutheran, XX (June, 1960), 97.

[65]Concordia Seminary Faculty, "A Statement on the Form and Function of Holy Scripture," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXI, 10 (October, 1960), 626-627. Adopted by the faculty April 26, 1960.

[66]Ibid.

basic assumption behind such a study was wrong. Their point was that the "theological problems" which the study purported to answer were not problems at all, because the Bible presented clear answers to questions about its form and function.[67] The problem, so the journal said, was that modern theology did not accept these answers and reduced practically all Christian doctrine to problems. Thus the Seminary faculty was guilty not of attempting to seek answers to legitimate theological problems, but rather of modernism, that is to say, of the belief that the Word as it stood was not sufficient.[68]

The Lutheran Witness, the official organ of the Missouri Synod, reported that Scharlemann too had signed the faculty statement indicating his "whole hearted acceptance" of the position it described.[69] This did not surprise The Confessional Lutheran. It commented: "The Statement in the style of 'contemporary' theology and its jargon is written in such gibberish that the most diverse spirits can claim to find

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[67]"A Catechism on the Controversy Concerning the Word of God Within the Missouri Synod," The Confessional Lutheran, XXII, 9 (September, 1961), 141.

[68]Ibid.

[69]"A Special Report," The Lutheran Witness, LXXX, 4 (April, 1961), 16.

their views in it."[70] Then it quoted The American Lutheran:

> The American Lutheran, which says "We like the contemporaneity of the statement," has pointed out that "the term inerrancy has been replaced--and thereby further interpreted--in another sentence by the positive term, truthfulness" (December 1960, p. 3). We know how Dr. Scharlemann understands the word "truthfulness."[71]

The excitement in the Synod itself was growing. On August 22, 1960, Dr. Behnken, the President of Synod, issued a letter "to all pastors and teachers of Synod" which, he hoped, would "put an end to the disturbance." The letter once again said that Dr. Scharlemann "had always insisted on verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture" and had always accepted and believed the doctrinal content of the 'Brief Statement.'" It also reported that whereas he had once suggested that the term "inerrancy" should no longer be used, he was now convinced that the word must be used after all.[72]

The letter from Dr. Behnken contained such phrases as "Dr. Scharlemann has experienced a change of heart and mind."[73] This led some people to assume that

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[70] The Confessional Lutheran, XXII, 9 (September, 1961), 141.

[71] Ibid.

[72] Letter in possession of the author.

[73] Ibid.

Dr. Scharlemann had, upon reflection and under pressure, altered his position. This proved not to be the case. On November 14, 1960, he wrote to a Mr. Jerome Becker of Truman, Minnesota, in reply to inquiries from that gentleman:

> (1) My essays do not contain false doctrine. For any one to say so is to misrepresent the facts. (2) The commotion you refer to was caused by misrepresentation and distortions of the Confessional Lutheran and kindred spirits. When the Praesidium of Synod examined my papers and the various derogatory remarks about them, the allegations of false doctrine proved to be wrong. (3) I have never taught otherwise than I do now. I do not know anything about taking anything back, since my essays were exploratory in nature.[74]

A special report of the dispute was published in The Lutheran Witness on April 4, 1961, quoting the Seminary Board of Control's decision that "we do not find anything in his papers for which we would have to declare him guilty of heresy."[75]

The April, 1961, Concordia Theological Monthly carried yet another of Dr. Scharlemann's essays, entitled, "God's Acts as Revelation." This was to supersede the previous exploratory essays. While there was little in the way of outright attack on traditional terminology

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[74]Letter photographically reproduced in the State of the Church Conference, Book of Documentation, 1961, p. 37.

[75]The Lutheran Witness, LXXX, 4 (April, 1961), 20.

it did repeat the basic theses presented in the earlier essays.[76]

Generally the seminary administration defended Scharlemann, while the President of the Synod tended to show greater conservatism. That this was the case is evident from a letter by Dr. Behnken to a Mr. A. Korff, dated April 26, 1961.

> As to your questions, permit me to say that when the vice presidents and I met a number of times with Dr. Scharlemann and when he told us that he had undergone "a change of mind and heart" ... there was nothing for us to do but to believe ... that his former position was untenable. From the very fact that we dealt with Dr. Scharlemann as we did you can draw the conclusion--and rightly so--that we were not in agreement with the doctrinal position he espoused in his papers.[77]

Scharlemann himself also wrote to Mr. Korff: "None of my papers ever contained false doctrine. Hence, there was nothing to retract. ... That's why you read nothing about retraction in the report."[78]

On November 29, 1961, a special report was presented by the President of Synod to a group consisting

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[76]Martin H. Scharlemann, "God's Acts as Revelation," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXII, 4 (April, 1961), 215.

[77]State of the Church, Book of Documents, 1962, pp. 16-17.

[78]Ibid., p. 15. The report referred to is evidently one carried in The Lutheran Witness, LXXX, 12 (December, 1961), 16.

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of all the district presidents and the faculties of the Springfield and St. Louis seminaries. The report stated:

> Dr. Scharlemann also recognized that the manner in which he presented his essays left much to be desired. There were sentences and paragraphs that were misleading. For this reason, Dr. Scharlemann has retracted the sentence "Scriptures are not in themselves a revelation" from his essay "The Bible as Record, Witness and Medium." [He] has further withdrawn the sentence "most certainly David believed that other gods ruled outside the confines of Israel" as found in the article "God is One."[79]

To some, this appeared to be an admission of and retraction of heresy. However, in the same report, the embattled professor made this reply to a question: "The changes I made were in matters of methodology, language, and in the instance of the use or non-use of the term 'inerrant.' Whatever modifications have appeared in the superseding paper 'God's Acts as Revelation,' are matters of clarification, emphasis, fuller context and style."[80]

Much to the embarrassment of the Synodical administration, the Scharlemann letter to Mr. Korff became known almost immediately after the above-mentioned

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[79]"A Special Report," The Lutheran Witness, LXXX, 12 (December, 1961), 16 ff.

[80]Ibid.

meeting. The Badger Lutheran reported that according to a letter from the Synodical Third Vice-President, the Rev. George Wittmer (also the chairman of the St. Louis Seminary Board of Control), Dr. Behnken had sent Scharlemann "a very kind letter advising and suggesting (not demanding or asking) that he consider resigning from his present position."[81] Wittmer emphasized, though, that neither the Board nor the Praesidium had asked for his resignation and stood by the report published in the December Lutheran Witness. Wittmer added this thought: "Please do not think that we would yield to pressure of a group like the editors of the Confessional Lutheran. I hope Synod knows its officers have more courage and sense than to do such a thing."[82]

The struggle and its long-range significance for the Missouri Synod and Lutheranism was becoming a well-known matter outside the Synod. As early as April, 1960, Dr. Hermann Sasse, well-known German theologian then living in Australia, took note of developments in the growing confrontation. It will be recalled that Sasse had great reservations about the doctrine of inerrancy, as developed by the second generation school

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[81]Letter quoted in The Badger Lutheran, XL, 4 (March 29, 1962), 12.

[82]Ibid.

of Missouri theologians, such as Theodore Engelder and others.[83] Nevertheless, he wrote to the future editor of the conservative Christian News, Herman Otten:

> Everybody knows that some of your professors [at the St. Louis seminary] have publicly taught things that are not reconcilable with the Lutheran Confessions. ... I am convinced that they themselves will see their mistakes. The Mariology e.g. put forward by Dr. Piepkorn ... is untenable. So is the prayer for the dead.[84]

In a direct but unnamed reference to Scharlemann he said in the same letter: "Also what has been circulated throughout the world by another man concerning the Bible is untenable as the author himself will probably see if he continues his studies."[85] Admitting that some of the thology of Franz Pieper and the Brief Statement might need some re-thinking, Sasse voiced his real concern. "But as the situation now appears ... the old fight between modernism and Fundamentalism is now going on in St. Louis. ... I am very much concerned about Concordia Seminary which is and ought to remain the last stronghold of Confessional Lutheran Theology. The eyes of the world are directed to St. Louis."[86]

In 1961 a group of pastors, teachers and laymen

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[83] Accents in Luther's Theology, quoted supra, p. 31.

[84] Letter printed in The Christian News, II, 15 (April 14, 1969), 5.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid.

within the Synod itself organized "The State of the Church Incorporated" to present hard evidence of heresy in the Missouri Synod. Their technique was to protest in print and to bring formal charges against false doctrine in accord with procedure as set forth in the Synodical Handbook.[87] The charter of this organization stated its purpose quite simply: "To preach, teach, instruct, and disseminate the true and inerrant Word of God according to the Scriptures ... as expounded in the Book of Concord ... and a 'Brief Statement.'"[88] The first annual conference held at Milwaukee included 150 people, fifty-nine of whom were identified as pastors.[89]

In September, 1961, The Lutheran World, published by the Lutheran World Federation, with which the Missouri Synod was not affiliated for doctrinal reasons, carried an article by Dr. Robert C. Schultz of Valparaiso University. Schultz sensed in all the ferment then going on in the Missouri Synod a reawakening of the spirit of the 1945 "Statement" of the "Forty-four." Along with a reexamination of the doctrine of the Word, the Schultz report stated that the Synodical Conference,

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[87] Handbook of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, 1969, pp. 109-117.

[88] Reported in The Lutheran News, II, 3 (February 10, 1964), 3.

[89] Ibid.

especially the Missouri Synod, was engaged in a re-evaluation of the doctrine of the church and of the practical questions of church fellowship.[90] The spirit of latitude expressed in the "Statement" of the "Forty-four" in regard to questions of fellowship, so the thinking went, was being expressed in the Scharlemann essays and other places within the Synod. The implication was clear that if there could be latitude in the church's view of Scripture, then the field covered by "open questions" would almost certainly be broadened. If that were the case, many prior objections to fellowship would decline in importance, and the possibilities of fellowship and union be greatly enhanced. This "new approach," Schultz said, was plainly outlined in the 1945 "Statement." Thus, he said, the position of the Forty-four (and Dr. Brux) was in the process of being adopted in Synod.[91]

The Confessional Lutheran was happy to note Schultz's article. The editors generally agreed with Schultz's connecting of the synodical ferment as it progressed in the 1960's with the "Forty-four." Moreover, the editors saw it as a vindication of their attacks on "A Statement" and their outrage at President

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[90] The Confessional Lutheran, XXIII, 1 (January, 1962), 9-10.

[91] Ibid.

Behnken's conciliatory handling of the problem. "[The Schultz Report] demonstrates the inanity of the 'Agreement' of the Missouri Praesidium with the '44' which was reported to Missouri clergy in a letter of its President dated January 18, 1947, which left the issues involved an open question."[92] The accusation clearly implied that if proper discipline had been brought to bear on the Forty-four, and had they been made to recant the "Statement," none of the present turmoil would have occurred.

The Schultz article contended that thirty years ago the questions posed by the Scharlemann essays and the new moves toward modification in the doctrine and practice of church fellowship would not have happened. The Confessional Lutheran agreed with this and commented, "For there was still unhesitating evangelical discipline within the Missouri Synod, and the position of genuine Lutheranism with respect to the issues under discussion."[93]

In this critique the conservatives who edited The Confessional Lutheran challenged what they referred to as the "thoroughly un-Lutheran" idea that all who professed themselves to be Christians were "the body of Christ." This somewhat extreme definition of who

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[92] Ibid. [93] Ibid.

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constituted "the body of Christ," that is to say, the church, seemed, on the face of it, to be at variance with such statements in the historic confessions as: "For, thank God a child of seven years old knows what the church is, namely the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of the Shepherd."[94] This would seem to demonstrate that, as controversy intensified, extreme positions were taken by both sides. The conservatives, as represented by groups such as the "State of the Church" and publications like The Confessional Lutheran, began to adopt a stance similar to that espoused by the Synod when it felt threatened by outsiders in the first period of its history and, in fact, went beyond Walther in their definitions of "church." Their position was similar to fundamentalism's response to modernism at the turn of the century.

Unquestionably, as the Scharlemann essays and Seminary faculty statement indicated, there was a growing demand for freedom to explore Scripture in the light of modern scholarship, the stated aim of which was the acquisition of new insights. To the traditionalists, all of this seemed to threaten the historic

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[94]Theodore G. Tappert, ed., The Book of Concord, The Confessions of The Evangelical Lutheran Church (Philadelphia: The Fortress Press, 1959), p. 315. Cf. pp. 610 ff.

Christian faith and to result in doctrinal chaos. As they saw it, the disappearance of a propositional definition of Lutheran "stance" would spell the end of what was referred to as "sound Lutheranism," and indicated that Missouri had joined the ranks of those mainline church bodies that had lost their faith and meaning. They wanted no new insights and no revision of the time-honored definitions and propositions as they understood them, and as they had been set out in the "Brief Statement."

While this struggle was developing in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, the move toward Christian cooperation and amalgamation was intensifying. 1960 saw the emergence of The American Lutheran Church, a merger of the American Lutheran Church of 1930, United Norwegian of 1917, the Danish Lutheran Church of 1896 and ultimately the Lutheran Free (Norwegian) Church of 1897, climaxing ten years of negotiations.[95] In 1962 the largest Lutheran body in America came into existence when the United Lutheran Church of 1918 and the Augustana Lutheran Church of 1860 merged.[96] The American Lutheran Church had a membership of 2,260,000 at the

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[95]Wentz, op. cit., pp. 376 ff.

[96]Ibid., pp. 379 ff.

time of its organization, while this new group, taking the name The Lutheran Church in America, comprised approximately 3,200,000 members.[97] Along with the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, American Lutheranism now consisted of three major mainline bodies in addition to several smaller and generally more doctrinally conscious groups.

Of the three major groups, the Lutheran Church in America was the least demanding in terms of doctrinal adherence. It had never undertaken a formulation of statements beyond Scripture and the historic confessional writings of the sixteenth century. It had never announced a traditional doctrinal basis that might become a legal code or standard of discipline.[98] As has been indicated, the Missouri Synod occupied the most conservative doctrinal position of the three major bodies as they existed in 1962.

By this process of amalgamation, the number of bodies officially participating in the overall work of the National Lutheran Council had been reduced to two; that is, the A.L.C. and the L.C.A. Unlike its fellow members of the Synodical Conference, Missouri, while not a member, had for a long period cooperated

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[97] Ibid., pp. 378, 380.

[98] Ibid. Cf. Wolf, op. cit., pp. 565-573.

unofficially with the council.[99] As early as 1958 the National Lutheran Council, in an attempt to broaden its representation and service, extended an invitation to Missouri to become a full participant. Dr. Paul Empie asked Missouri to an exploratory meeting with this goal in mind.[100]

This invitation was declined by Dr. Behnken because of pressure from members of the Synodical Conference. The reason given was that other members of the Synodical Conference were skeptical of the current merger negotiations that would eventually produce the A.L.C. and the L.C.A. Particularly were they concerned with the fact that doctrine seemed to be "in flux" in those groups.[101]

Nevertheless, after a series of letters clarifying positions, the Missouri Synod agreed to enter discussions with representatives of the National Lutheran Council concerning the doctrinal agreement necessary to cooperate in the Council's work. In 1961 it was decided to establish a new cooperative agency. Its guiding principles were to include: (1) an invitation to all Lutheran bodies in the United States to participate;

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[99] Supra., p. 33.

[100] The American Lutheran, XLII, 3 (March, 1959), 13. Paul C. Empie to John W. Behnken, October 6, 1958.

[101] Ibid.

(2) new agencies for theological study and Christian service; (3) an understanding that no organic union was implied; (4) participants were free to enter into or continue relationships outside the agency.[102]

The American Lutheran Church approved this plan in October, 1964, the Missouri Synod in June, 1965, and the Lutheran Church in America in June, 1966. As of January, 1967, the new Lutheran Council in the United States of America (LCUSA) became an effective cooperative agency representing the interests of approximately eight million Lutherans in this country.[103]

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[102] Wolf, op. cit., p. 615.

[103] Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

CLEVELAND AND BEYOND

The 1962 convention of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod was scheduled for Cleveland, Ohio. In the minds of conservatives it was to be the "crisis convention." As The Confessional Lutheran put it:

> The crisis convention in Cleveland in June will have to deal with the Scharlemann case and related matters in a manner which they have alas not been dealt with during all of the four years since they have come to light--in a manner in which district conventions have as a matter of fact been officially dissuaded from dealing with them.[1]

And later in another article the same periodical protested bitterly that the last twenty-five years had seen increasing demands for "reexamination of doctrine." Now this cry from the "liberals" had reached the critical state. The article concluded with this statement: "The Cleveland Convention will be Missouri's convention of crisis."[2] Actually, this claim of "crisis convention" was raised at each of the Synod's conventions

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[1] The Confessional Lutheran, XXIII, 1 (January, 1962), 9.

[2] Ibid., p. 10.

over the next eight years.

From June 20 to 29 the Synod met in convention at Cleveland. As was expected, much of the drama was centered around the person and writings of Dr. Martin Scharlemann, which is to say the doctrine of "inerrancy." A number of memorials presented to the Synod demanded, either directly or indirectly, that he be removed from office for "having publicly expressed teachings contrary to the clear doctrine of Scripture" and for failure to make a "clear cut and decisive correction of these errors."[3]

Two days prior to the opening of the convention, open hearings were held on doctrine and inter-church relations. Though they were helpful in clarifying problems, they by no means dissolved the tensions. As reported in the periodical Christianity Today, Scharlemann quietly read a prepared statement to the assembly. "By the Grace of God, I am--as I have been in the past--fully committed to the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures. I hold these Scriptures to be the Word of God in their totality and in all their parts to be utterly truthful,

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[3]Reports and Memorials, Forty-fifth Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Cleveland, Ohio, June 20-30, 1962 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), Memorials 331-344, pp. 161-171.

infallible, and without error."[4]

Following this confession of faith, Scharlemann proceeded to "withdraw" the following four essays "in their entirety": "The Bible as Record, Witness, and Medium of Revelation;" "Revelation and Inspiration;" "The Inerrancy of Scripture;" and "God is One." In addition to this he asked the Synod's forgiveness for the fact that some of his essays had caused confusion because of "inadequate formulation" and thus contributed to the "present unrest."[5]

However, his reported statement went on to say:

> Such withdrawal is here understood to mean that the questions to which these essays proposed to address themselves will not again be dealt with by me on the basis of anything written in them. If and when I need to address myself to these issues again, any such effort will be taken only in full cooperation with my colleagues on the Seminary faculty and any others in Synod delegated to carry out this task. At that time, I assure You, a new, more considered and properly safeguarded approach will be used.[6]

On this basis, Synod passed the following Resolution: "That the Synod assure Dr. Scharlemann of its forgiveness by prayers on his behalf, by brotherly encouragement for his ministry, and by the request that

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[4] Christianity Today, VI, 21 (July 20, 1962), 32-33.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1962, p. 163.

its members refrain from attacks upon him on the basis of these essays." The vote was 650 for, 17 against.[7]

Scharlemann's submission to the will of Synod was clear. It was also clear that in no part of his statement did he affirm the use of the term "inerrancy." In assessing his motivation, one need go no further than his own explanation. He apparently felt that the current synodical turmoil was too high a price to pay for ideas that, while valid, possibly suffered from inadequate "formulation." His statement indicated that the issues were still verymuch alive, but that he recognized the need for procedural safeguards in the future to maintain tranquility in Synod. His later espousal of a conservative position appears to be less of a theological conversion than a revulsion against disorder and confusion among seminarians and synodical laity.

The agitation against Scharlemann did not cease with the vote. There were still those within the Synod who were not satisfied with the wording of Scharlemann's statement, which, in their view, was equivocal. They did not want him to escape discipline without a retraction. The case of the "Forty-four" Statementarians was

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[7] Ibid.

still too fresh in the minds of some.[8] The concept of withdrawal of a statement or essay appeared to conservatives to be simply a loophole through which "errorists" could escape the disciplinary consequences of their writings and teachings. A complete retraction was the only satisfactory method of resolution.

The conservative State of the Church Conference, reported in its journal that at the open hearings in Cleveland, Dr. Scharlemann had refused to answer the question whether he still believed that there were factual mistakes in Scripture.[9] To this charge Scharlemann replied:

> Committee Three [Doctrinal Affairs] was quite explicit in saying that no false doctrine was involved in my action at Cleveland. Its resolution points out that no charge of false doctrine has been sustained. My statement to the Convention, therefore, contains no statement on retracting false doctrine.[10]

Thus on April 2, 1964, five clergymen of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod charged the seminary professor with "promulgation of an adherence to false

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[8] Supra. Cf. President Behnken's letter to Missouri Synod clergy, January 18, 1947, Appendix III. Also cf. Koehler's analysis of "An Agreement."

[9] Faithful Word, I, 4 (n.n., n.d.), p. 14.

[10] Ibid., p. 46.

doctrine," that is, heresy. Synod's Board for Higher Educatian refused to hear the charges.[11]

In response to the many memorials presented to the Cleveland Convention pertaining to the doctrine of Scripture and the Word, Synod went on record as reaffirming its belief in plenary, verbal inspiration "as taught in the Scripture itself ... and in the Lutheran Confessions."[12] Christianity Today in reporting this vote noted that it was done by voice vote and was apparently unanimous. This publication then reported that two following resolutions also were virtually unanimous. The first of these was a ruling that Resolution Nine of Committee Three of the 1959 San Francisco convention was unconstitutional.[13] This resolution had held that Synod's pastors and teachers were bound to teach in harmony with every doctrinal statement of confessional nature adopted by Synod, that is to say, the Brief Statement of 1932. This was said to be unconstitutional on the grounds that it had the effect of amending the confessional basis of Synod's constitution without following proper procedure.[14] Proper procedure

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[11] Lutheran News, II, 18 (September 7, 1964), 1 ff.

[12] Missouri Synod, Reports and Memorials, 1962, Memorials 331, 338, 339, 340, pp. 104-105.

[13] Supra, Chapter III, p. 90.

[14] Missouri Synod, Reports and Memorials, 1962,

would have called for an amendment to Article II of the Synodical Constitution, which restricts Synod's confessional basis to the Scripture, the Ecumenical Creeds and the historic Lutheran Confessions.[15]

The second resolution referred to was a re-affirmation of the constitutional confessional subscription. As for synodically adopted statements, members were urged to uphold them and a call was issued to make a study of their status. As Christianity Today reported, this "was interpreted ... as a refusal to accept further doctrinal restrictions which would make difficult [the Synod's] witness to other Christians, Lutherans in particular."[16]

Liberal hopes that this retreat from the rigid position of the San Francisco Resolution Nine were heightened by yet another development. This was the passage, without debate, of a proposal that would make possible the establishment of a new cooperative agency to replace the National Lutheran Council. This amounted to an enabling resolution, permitting Synod to join the

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Memorials 611, 612, pp. 272, 273. Cf. Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1962, resolution 6.01.

[15]Missouri Synod, Handbook, The Synodical Constitution, Article II, p. 15. Cf. Reports and Memorials, 1962, memorial 613a, b, d, pp. 273-274.

[16]Christianity Today, VI, 21 (July 20, 1962), 33.

emerging Lutheran Council in the United States of America.[17] While it should be noted that this was still a far cry from union or fellowship, it clearly was a break in the Missourian pattern of unequivocally staying clear of formal alignments, even in the areas of service.

As further indication that the Missouri Synod was entering what The Christian Century called a "new phase of its life," the convention marked the end of the Behnken era. He had asked the delegates not to consider him again for the office which he had held for nine consecutive three-year terms dating back to the immediate Brief Statement days of the mid-thirties. Replacing him was Dr. Oliver Harms, Synodical First Vice-President since 1959.[18]

In 1964, Martin Scharlemann was quoted as giving an assessment of the impact of the first two years of the Harms' administration:

> Dr. John C. Bennett ... noted especially the change in attitude that had taken place among Roman Catholic clergy since the days of John XXIII. "They can now be themselves," Dr. Bennett observed. ... A new kind of spirit prevails also within our church body under the administration

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[17] R. C. Wolf, op. cit., pp. 627-628.

[18] Christian Century, LXXIX, 29 (July 18, 1962), 894-898.

> of Dr. Harms. Men can be themselves. There was a time when they were afraid, fearful of what might be reported to the higher echelons. In fact we remember the time when men dreaded to present exegetical papers. ... That era has happily come to an end. As a result a kind of theological renaissance is quietly going on also among us.[19]

This note of optimism was also evident in the official synodical organ, The Lutheran Witness. Its editor summarized the significance of the Cleveland convention in an editorial which aroused a good deal of controversy and helped to intensify conservative attacks on the publication itself. The Witness, already under attack from such splinter groups as those who edited The Confessional Lutheran, now was to be criticized as the house organ of the entrenched liberals in St. Louis.[20]

The summary editorial in the Witness began by saying that the cries of "crisis convention" were gloomy but correct, because the Synod had reached a "turning point" in its 115th year. The "turning point," as the editor saw it, consisted of three major moves:

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[19] Quoted in The Christian News, II, 10 (March 10, 1969), 10.

[20] Confessional Lutheran, XXII, 9 (September, 1961), 146 ff., stated that "the columns of The Lutheran Witness were closed to members of synod who uphold its historic position."

> Emphatically, and in many ways the Cleveland convention repudiated the legalistic tactics of a tiny segment which had troubled Synod relentlessly for decades and the devious devices of splinter groups which had spawned irritation and festering discontent during the past triennium.[21]

To the editor this reflected a synodical move away from petty doctrinal bickering and a move toward concern with the mission of the church. Noting that a new Commission on Theology and Church Relations had been established to deal with doctrinal problems, the editor felt that now the way was prepared for the resumption of a "true evangelical spirit."[22]

The second feature of the turning point was the convention's apparent willingness to move out of isolation with respect to other Christians, particularly with fellow Lutherans. Pointing out that Walther had worked toward unity in the early days of the Synod's history, and that unionism was really a non-Biblical term, the writer rejoiced that the delegates had reacted favorably to matters of church cooperation. This, he said, was "an unprecedented opportunity for Missouri to bear a Christian witness that would be listened to and

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[21]Martin W. Mueller, "Turning Point," The Lutheran Witness, LXXXI, 8 (August 21, 1962), 406, 407, 415.

[22]Ibid.

respected."[23]

According to the Witness, the third turning came with the recognition that the Gospel had social implications. To support this contention, it indicated that several resolutions dealt with the relevance of the Gospel to the Christian in relation to his fellowmen, and the establishment of a Commission on Social Action by the delegates: "These and other accents on the social implications of the Gospel must be viewed as a decisive move forward."[24]

In concluding the article, the editor said that all of this was being achieved without any compromise on Scripture and the Confessions.

That this was the beginning of an era of comparative moderation in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod is beyond dispute. The triumph of moderation at Cleveland reflected the fact that a new leadership that had gradually been assuming key synodical positions in the post-war era had finally managed to solidify itself. The election of moderate conservative Oliver Harms to the synodical presidency, along with the creation of the crucial Committee on Theology and Church Relations, whose membership had an apparent balance between moderate and conservative, indicated that a new era had

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[23] Ibid. [24] Ibid.

begun, however temporary.

That this new spirit spoken of by both Mueller and Scharlemann could grow unchallenged was unlikely. The polity of the Missouri Synod permits great changes to occur from convention to convention, depending largely on the people who serve as delegates and those who become their leaders. The possibility of changing Synod's direction by agitation and political maneuvering loomed ever larger in the minds of those who were dissatisfied with current synodical positions. As has been indicated, The Confessional Lutheran was established in 1940 precisely to fight the St. Louis Resolutions which looked toward fellowship with the American Lutheran Church. Judging by the results, it was comparatively successful in this respect. It will further be recalled that this conservative journal led the fight against the "Forty-four" and "A Statement."[25]

The period from the Cleveland convention of 1962 through the Denver convention of 1969 saw the proliferation of unofficial journals and organizations. At the beginning, most of these tended to be of conservative views. Later, similar publications of moderate-to-liberal persuasion made their appearance. These developments indicated the contemporary tone in the Synod.

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[25] Supra.

that group which felt itself to be outside the synodical power structure, with its control of communications and appointive power, resorted to unofficial organizations, manifestos and publications. This was by no means a new development in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. It simply reached a crescendo in the post-Cleveland period.

As early as 1964, The Confessional Lutheran recognized the need for dissident groups to form semi-underground organizations.[26] Quoting from Charles Porterfield Krauth's The Conservative Reformation and its Theology, it traced the course of error in a church body. Krauth had said that error first asks toleration, then it demands equal rights, and finally it asserts supremacy. The Confessional Lutheran went on to say that error has pretty well run through its three stages in the Missouri Synod. Therefore

> members who remain true to the position [formerly held by Synod] are not merely seeing their protestations ignored and dismissed by recommendations of "no action" in convention procedure. ... But are being "censured," threatened with "discipline" and expelled as "disturbers of the peace of the church."[27]

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[26]"Must True Missourians Go Underground?" The Confessional Lutheran, XXV, 2 (November, 1964), 107-108.

[27]Ibid.

The most significant case in point was that of Herman Otten, which began in the mid-1950's and culminated in the publication of what was to become the most influential of the unofficial conservative publications in terms of reaching the grassroots constituency of the Synod.

In 1957, Herman Otten, a student at the St. Louis seminary, graduated from that institution with a B.D. degree and with an M.A. degree from Washington University granted in the same year.[28] A few years prior to his graduation Otten had written a letter to The Christian Century protesting that publication's description of Concordia Seminary as an institution marked by its "openness" and "catholicity." In his letter he asserted that "any suggestion of 'openness' and 'catholicity' at Concordia Seminary which suggests that at least the 'younger generation' is now ready to sacrifice part of Scriptural truth upon the altar of false ecumenism is simply not true."[29] To this statement he added the thought that to a confessing Christian there could be no tolerance of error, no compromise, no "golden middle." Four years after his defense of the orthodoxy

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[28] The Lutheran News, V, 19 (September 18, 1967), 1.

[29] The Christian Century, LXXI, 51 (December 25, 1954), 1556-1557.

of the St. Louis seminary he was denied a call to the parish ministry by the faculty of the seminary.[30]

In 1958, Otten received the S.T.M. degree from Concordia Seminary but was denied certification for the ministry because of theological disagreements and related activities while a student there. He made the claim that a number of Seminary professors denied such traditional Christian teachings as the inerrancy of Scripture, the historicity of Genesis and Jonah, the immortality of the soul, and the vicarious atonement of Christ.[31] Otten, along with several other students, some of whom would later become collaborators in his publications, named Dr. Martin Scharlemann, Dr. Horace Hummel, Dr. Arthur Carl Piepkorn and Professor Herman Waetjen as the chief errorists at the Seminary. Otten said that Scharlemann taught that a "symbolical interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis should be permissible." Dr. Hummel was accused, in part, of teaching that the story of Jonah was a parable. Professor Waetjen was said to have taught that the Bible contained errors and contradictions and was not verbally inspired. Dr. Piepkorn did not affirm as a

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[30]Arnold Frank Krugler, "For God and Country" (unpublished master's thesis, Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago, 1968), p. 31.

[31]The Lutheran News, loc. cit.

matter of dogmatic certainty either the inerrancy of Scripture or the historicity of the Genesis account. The accused professors were not confronted. The synodically-recognized first step in matters of offense or admonition, this concern was expressed to Dr. J. T. Mueller, a seminary professor, and Dr. Henry Grueber, a former synodical vice president. These men, along with the students, took their concerns directly to Dr. Behnken, the President of Synod.[32]

Upon graduation, Otten elected to forego assignment to a parish in order to pursue the S.T.M. degree at the Seminary. However, during this time he filled a pulpit vacancy at Trinity Lutheran Church in New Haven, Missouri, a common procedure for students in their later years at the seminary. This congregation issued him a "call" to assume the pastorate in January, 1958, which the seminary returned to them, explaining that Otten needed yet another six months to complete the degree requirements. It was agreed that he could continue to serve the congregation on an interim basis.[33]

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[32]Trinity's Brief in the Board of Appeals of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. The Western District of the Lutheran Church Plaintiff-Appellee vs. Trinity Lutheran Church of New Haven, Missouri. November 29, 1966. The Lutheran News, V, 19 (September 18, 1967), 7-9.

[33]Ibid.

On May 7, 1958, Otten was informed by the director of graduate studies of the seminary, Dr. Martin Scharlemann, that he had been declared academically inadequate to continue work toward the Th.D. degree. In a petition to the faculty, Otten cited his academic record as being more than adequate for admission to the program and bluntly accused Scharlemann of having told him to leave the seminary, not for academic reasons but for speaking directly to Behnken about heretical teachings at the seminary.[34]

On May 28, Scharlemann informed Otten that the decision not to admit him was sustained by the faculty without dissent. Furthermore, Scharlemann demanded a point-by-point apology for accusations made in the appeal, declaring that the ability to distinguish between "what is true and what is not true ... is a necessary qualification of any one who wants to serve in the ministry."[35]

A further exchange of letters produced no results on either side.[36] The faculty then refused to place Otten's name on the placement list for reception of a

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[34]"A Petition to the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri," reprinted in The Confessional Lutheran, XXV, 11 (November, 1964), 110.

[35]Letter from Martin H. Scharlemann to Herman Otten, May 28, 1958, reprinted in ibid.

[36]Ibid.

formal call from a congregation. This action was appealed to the Board of Control of the seminary. During the processing of this appeal, Otten continued to serve the church at New Haven on an interim basis, with the blessing of Dr. George Wittmer, president of Synod's Western District and a Seminary Board of Control member.[37]

On December 4, 1958, the Board of Control met to receive a report from its subcommittee which said that in their opinion Otten's action in discussing classroom lectures publicly, without first following the Scriptural injunction to "tell him his fault between thee and him alone" (Matthew 18:15), was sin per se, that is, it was a sin under any circumstance, regardless of the factual truth of the discussions. On January 15, 1959, the Board upheld the faculty's decision not to certify Otten for a permanent call to the ministry.[38]

Then began an exhaustive period of litigation, beginning with Otten's taking his case to the Synodical Board of Appeals. On February 5, 1960, the Board ruled that it was up to the seminary to show cause why the defendant should not be certified as eligible for the

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[37] Trinity's brief, loc. cit.

[38] Ibid.

ministry. The following November it announced a 5-5 vote, declaring this to be no decision, and referred the case back to Dr. Behnken.[39]

Trinity Congregation, assuming the seminary not to have proved its case, issued a formal call to Herman Otten on January 8, 1961, which was promptly accepted by him. On January 18, William Stelling, then president of the Western District, refused to authorize the installation of Otten into the Trinity pastorate. This was apparently in violation of Section 4.15a, paragraph 2, of Synod's by-laws, which calls for faculty endorsement before ordination, which would precede an installation into the pastoral office.[40] Now the congregation was involved along with their chosen pastor. Trinity was temporarily suspended from the District in May in a controversial action by the president of the district. At the June, 1961, convention of the Western District, the members of Trinity were excluded from participation in the celebration of the sacrament of Holy Communion.[41] All of this, under the by-laws then in effect, was illegal, the district president not having such power. The by-law in question, section

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Handbook, 1969, p. 94.

[41] Trinity's brief, loc. cit.

5.25, was amended at the 1962 Cleveland convention, giving him such suspensive power, but in 1961 this was not the case.[42] Nevertheless, the congregation remained suspended. Appeal followed appeal, until finally after several periods of reinstatement and expulsion the Synodical Board of Appeals adjudicated the case in May, 1967, in favor of the congregation, declaring in a 5-4 decision that "the suspension of Trinity from membership in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod is of no further force and effect."[43] Otten in 1971 was still not recognized on the official roster of Synod or listed among its clergy.

This case is somewhat significant not only for the constitutional issues it raised pertaining to a congregation's rights within Synod but for more sweeping, long-term reasons as well. In 1963, Herman Otten began the publication of a periodical called The Lutheran News or, since January, 1968, The Christian News. The masthead of the paper states purposes and policy which may be summarized as follows: (1) it is an unofficial paper designed for "rank and file" Christians;

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[42]Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Handbook, 1969, p. 112. Cf. Handbook, 1960, section 5.25.

[43]The Lutheran News, loc. cit. Cf. Lutheran Witness, Official Notices, May 28, 1963; July 23, 1963; April 14, 1964; July, 1965; July 23, 1967.

(2) its commitment is to historic, orthodox Lutheranism; (3) it is opposed to modern, theological systems; (4) it sees its job as "undeceiving" the rank and file who have no idea what modernists are planning for them; (5) it claims no infallibility and invites criticism and correction.[44]

This paper first appeared during the time that the Otten-Seminary and Trinity-Western District cases were being fought in the various appeals systems of the Synod. There can be little doubt that the personal involvement of the editor and the congregation which supported him in his action and publishing endeavor helped to give the publication an air of hostility toward particular persons and institutions within the Missouri Synod. The popular journalistic format and writing style, coupled with a somewhat sensationalist approach to problems and personalities, were apparently geared to reach the grass-roots of the Synod as stated in the paper's acknowledged policy. That this style met with some success is an undeniable fact. In a report given at a testimonial dinner for the editor on February 22, 1970, it was noted that the circulation had grown from the first issue of 800 mimeographed copies to the current level of 24,000 printed, 19,000 of these paid

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[44] The Christian News, II, 19 (May 12, 1969), 2.

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subscriptions, the rest "gifts" in the interest of the greater goals of the paper.[45]

The personal attacks on officials, pastors, professors and others both in and out of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod widened and increased in intensity with the passage of time. Drs. Oliver Harms, Roland Wiederaenders and Walter Wolbrecht were said to be dumping "poison into Missouri's spiritual waters" by lending the support of the synodical administration to errorists and heretics. Wayne Saffen, F. Dean Leuking and Jaroslav Pelikan were accused of the denial of inerrancy, renunciation of Walther's and Pieper's theology and advocacy of universalism and evolution. Martin Marty was accused of advocating sexual promiscuity in an interview with a popular magazine. The stated solution to dealing with these man and many others, most notably the major portions of the St. Louis and River Forest faculties, was either their recantation of heretical positions or expulsion. The editor and his staff constantly maintained that all of this was permissible because "the real issue centers around the Bible."

> Is the Bible God's directly revealed and inerrant Word or is it merely the interpretation of what certain unknown authors

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[45]Grace Otten, "Support Christian News," Christian News, III, 9 (March 2, 1970), 5.

> considered to be come "mighty acts of God?" If the Missouri Synod would only permit the historic Christian doctrine that the Bible is God's factually inerrant revelation to man, then most of the other issues would disappear.[46]

It was in its grass-roots appeal that Otten's paper marked a change from similar endeavors of the past, such as The Confessional Lutheran. Formerly these unofficial journals had been designed to reach those already conversant with the theological problems existing in the Synod. Otten's publication seemed designed, and it was so stated in its policy, to inform those people, both clergy and laity, who were not aware of the danger from the theological "left."[47] This, then, resulted in a highly personalized treatment of the issues, so that the uninformed might more readily identify the people and their particular errors which threatened the formerly "sound" synodical position.

In all of this, there was an element of anti-intellectualism with which the "grass-roots" could identify. Here and there, throughout the various issues, the reader was reminded that most of the Synod's problems could be traced to the scholarship of the modern

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[46] The Lutheran News, I, 2 (January 1, 1963), 1. Cf. The Christian News, IV, 21 (June 14, 1971), 4-7.

[47] Supra. Point 1 of editorial policy. See note 44 this chapter.

theologians at the St. Louis seminary and to a lesser degree those at River Forest and Valparaiso University.[48] The constant call was for a "housecleaning" at these institutions and, failing that, an "organizational re-alignment" of American Lutheranism. By that statement the editor and others were calling for a restructuring of Lutheranism in America into conservative and liberal organizations, with an appropriate distribution of capital and property.[49]

Some critics maintained that the impact of Otten's paper was overstated.[50] It is the present author's impression that The Lutheran-Christian News made a deep impression far in excess of its circulation figures. Aside from its circulation growth, certain moderate tendencies in Synod either stopped or considerably slowed during the later years of its publication. While there is really no objective way of showing the exact relationship, the attention given to the paper in high places indicates that it was recognized as a force for the molding of public opinion within the Synod. The reported "viciousness" of the personal attacks can also

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[48] Christian News, II, 19 (May 12, 1969), passim.

[49] Christian News, III, 9 (March 2, 1970), 1 ff.

[50] "Stuenkel Jabs Church Establishment," Christian News, IV, 1 (January 4, 1971), 3.

not be denied.[51] On October 3, 1969, the Council of Presidents of Synod felt compelled to issue a formal statement to all members of Synod, stating in part that "we are of the conviction that the publication now known as 'Christian News,' disseminated with or without the prior consent of those who receive it, is an obstacle to the furtherance of the objectives of the Synod, breeds mistrust, creates unnecessary tensions, and disturbs God's servants in the performance of their tasks. We therefore, unanimously repudiate this publication and caution against lending credence or support to it."[52]

Topping the list of signers was the name of Jacob A. O. Preus, the newly elected President of Synod, a self-acknowledged conservative for whom the now repudiated journal had vigorously campaigned.[53]

This was not the first repudiation. As early as 1964 the Council of Administrators of Synod had felt it necessary to issue a formal notice of renunciation in The Lutheran Witness. It declared that the publication

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[51] Ibid.

[52] Statement of Council of Presidents to the Members of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod (October 3, 1969). See Appendix IV.

[53] Infra. Chapter V passim.

in no sense was an official synodical publication, but a private venture into journalism. As further reasons for repudiation, the notice listed the facts that Otten was not synodically ordained, that (at the time) his congregation had been expelled from synod, and finally it "was in violation of the spirit and letter of Resolution 3-22 of the Cleveland delegate synod (Proceedings, p. 112)."[54]

These actions would seem to indicate that the attacks were being felt in Synod. They were without precedent even during the days of the bitter disputes over the St. Louis Resolutions of 1938 and the controversy surrounding the "Statement of the Forty-four" of 1945.

In 1965, Synod met in its triennial convention at Detroit and, in the words of The Christian Century, continued, under the Harms administration, to take "steps that indicated gradual abandonment of its traditional policy of relative isolation from other Christian bodies."[55]

President Harms, who was re-elected at the

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[54]Lutheran Witness, LXXXIII, 4 (April 14, 1964), 29.

[55]David Runge, "Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod in Triennial Session," The Christian Century, LXXXII, 29 (July 21, 1965), 922.

convention to a second term, expressed the continued spirit of the 1962 Cleveland convention in his presidential address:

> Though our founding fathers may not have intended it to be, our synod came to live and grow in relative isolation. ... Now the walls have crumbled. We have been breaking out into a world that is somewhat strange, always changing and quite terrifying. New questions clamor for answers and old answers are being put to the test in our lives and in the market place where people live.[56]

It was at the Detroit convention that delegates overwhelmingly approved a recommendation that Synod participate in the new cooperative agency, the Lutheran Council in the United States of America, whose goals were service and theological study.[57] The final resolution to join this agency was a blow to the conservatives, most of whom regarded it as tantamount to unionism and a step toward affiliation with the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. Both of these were prototypes of the latitudinarian ecumenicity which they feared and hated.

Detroit also saw the adoption of a series of resolutions commonly referred to as the "Mission Affirmations," which indicated a new openness toward the

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[56]Oliver R. Harms, "The President's Address," Missouri Synod Proceedings, 1965, p. 9.

[57]Ibid. Resolution 3-12, pp. 109, 110.

world outside the Missouri Synod.[58] Essentially they were a call to work together with the entire Christian Church in order to "edify Christ's body and advance his mission." The titles of the resolutions were indicative of their spirit. They were: "The Church is God's Mission;" "The Church is Christ's Mission to the Whole World;" "The Church is Christ's Mission to the Church;" "The Church is Christ's Mission to the Whole Man."[59]

As The Christian Century reported, the foundation for these calls for a widening of perspective was a study and report prepared by Martin L. Kretzmann, who had spent thirty years as a missionary in India.[60] Coincidentally, two of his brothers had been among the "Forty-four" signers of a Statement in 1945. On comparison the "Mission Affirmation" appeared to be an elaboration of the openness and evangelical spirit which the "Forty-four" had pleaded for and been forced to withdraw in 1947.[61] However, as of 1965 they were official policy.

The Synod also called for the "Lord's blessing"

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[58] Ibid. Resolutions 1-01A to 1-01F, pp. 78-88. Included as Appendix V.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Runge, loc. cit.

[61] Cf. Appendices II and V.

on conversations with the American Lutheran Church looking toward pulpit and altar fellowship which were then in progress.[62] At the same time an invitation was extended to the Lutheran Church in America to open doctrinal discussions.[63] In yet another resolution, the Synod extended invitations to the Wisconsin and Evangelical (Norwegian) Synods to resume doctrinal discussions, with the hope that they might both drop their acts of fellowship suspension.[64] In the same spirit of reconciliation, President Harms reported that he had appointed Dr. Oswald Hoffmann as synodical representative to the third session of the Vatican Council.[65] In a move that surprised outside observers, the Detroit convention adopted the following Resolution: "That we commend our President for his direction in sending representatives to the third session of Vatical Council II and urge a continued and favorable response to any potential representation at the fourth session of Vatican Council II in the fall of 1965."[66]

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[62]Missouri Synod, Proceedings, Resolution 3-06, pp. 105-106.

[63]Ibid. Resolution 3-06A, p. 106.

[64]Ibid. Resolution 3-05, p. 105.

[65]Ibid. The President's Triennial Report, p. 13.

[66]Ibid. Resolution 11-06, p. 179.

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The tone of moderation at Detroit was also evident in the defeat of resolutions calling for a fact-finding committee to investigate heresy charges in synod; demanding that Dr. Martin Marty resign from the staff of the non-denominational Christian Century; that Dr. Alfred O. Fuerbringer be removed as president of Concordia Seminary for tolerating heresy; and that such professors as Dr. Scharlemann and others be disciplined.[67] While not citing specific names, Dr. Harms assailed the critics of these men for their "public accusations and charges, and ... insinuations. Carelessness has added to uncertainty and dismay. Propaganda has produced impatience, suspicion, fear and dissension. Responsible leaders have been hindered in discharging their duties. The word of our Lord's kingdom among us and through us has been hampered."[68] To this, Dr. Fuerbringer added, "Every time an accusation of false doctrine is made it is assumed that the accusation is true. As far as I know, no accusation of false doctrine in recent years has been sustained."[69]

Proposals to study the possibility of joining the

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[67] Ibid., Resolutions 5-15, 5-16, 5-17, 5-19, 5-20, 5-21, 5-22, pp. 127-128.

[68] Ibid., "The President's Address," p. 7.

[69] Runge, op. cit., p. 923.

international Lutheran World Federation and to contribute money to a subsidiary ecumenical agency of that organization in which Lutherans and Roman Catholics were cooperating were also adopted.[70] Along with these, Missouri also showed considerable interest in social action, passing resolutions regarding fair employment and housing.[71]

The decisions reached at Detroit, in the words of Christianity Today,

> probably mark the final burial of relations with the Wisconsin and Evangelical Lutheran Synods, with whom Missouri had been aligned for more than ninety years in the Synodical Conference. The Conference continues to exist on paper now consisting only of Missouri and the tiny Slovak Synod.[72]

The moderate, "outgoing spirit" of this convention was surprising to most observers both in and out of the Synod. It appeared to some that Missouri was about to cast off its isolation and begin to capitalize on its potential and promise. Martin E. Marty summarized this feeling:

> Many believed Synod had officially

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[70]Missouri Synod, Proceedings, Resolutions 3-14, 3-15, p. 111.

[71]Ibid. Resolution 9-24, p. 172.

[72]"Missouri Synod: An Outgoing Spirit," Christianity Today, IX, 21 (July 16, 1965), 33.

> launched a new day of commitment to Christ and His Word when at its national convention in Detroit in 1965, the synodical delegates enthusiastically adopted the "Missouri affirmations." Clearly the church body had declared its dependence on the Holy Sprit in order for the whole church to be Christ's Mission to the whole world, to the whole Church itself and to the whole man in the whole society. It was one of Synod's finest hours.[73]

The change in direction from the spirit expressed at San Francisco in 1959 by Resolution Nine is not easy to assess. There is no objective way of measuring the importance of the openness of the Harms administration that had been lauded by Dr. Scharlemann.[74] It should be noted, however, that the polity of Synod made it possible for conventions to be composed of a high percentage of first-time voting members.[75] This was not only a possibility but a probability, as Dr. Harms himself indicated in his presidential address at Detroit when he noted that most of the delegates in 1965 had not been at the "turning point" convention in Cleveland in 1962.[76] This not only insured maximum voter independence but, with the huge turnover in delegates from

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[73]Martin E. Marty, loc. cit.

[74]Supra, p. 127.

[75]Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Handbook, pp. 33-34. By-laws 1.51, 1.53, 1.55.

[76]Ibid.

convention to convention made policy modifications and even policy reversals a distinct possibility.

While a convention was by no means a rubber stamp for the current administration, synodical experience tended to demonstrate that a good deal of the decision-making was dependent on the various committees, and their recommendations pertaining to the vast number of overtures and memorials presented to the Synod. These were routed by the President to the committees appointed by him.[77] All of this tended, in practice, to make the President and the committees extremely important. It was their recommendation which, more often than not, determined the fate of a particular report or overture. It must be borne in mind, however, that this was not always the case.

The possibilities of political maneuvering before and during a convention are obvious. They were apparent to those who at the time felt themselves out of power and the decision-making process. A propaganda campaign throughout the Synod seemed the most likely way to influence future synodical delegates and synodical elections. This, in part, accounts for the fact that Herman Otten felt compelled to get his publication into as many synodical homes as possible, whether it was

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[77] Ibid., by-law 127, 2f.

asked for or not. This, as the "Forty-four" had decided in 1945, was perhaps the only way to influence synodical officialdom. The difference following Detroit was in the intensity of the propaganda and the increasing personalization of the issues. A large percentage of synodical membership, particularly its leadership, was besieged by increasingly scathing attacks on persons and issues in preparation for the convention of 1967, to be held in New York, Synod having moved from triennial to biennial conventions.[78]

A review of the activities of the 1967 New York convention gives the impression that perhaps the liberalizing tendencies noted by virtually all observers of the Detroit convention had passed and were receding. During one of its sessions, as reported in the daily minutes, it was announced that the special "Ebenezer Thank Offering," designed to raise 40 million dollars, had reached the half-way mark with only five million dollars pledged.[79] The appeal's lack of success, which some blamed on the liberalizing tendencies in Synod and the members' unwillingness to support such trends, in the

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[78]Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Reports and Memorials, 1962. Report of the Synodical Survey Commission, pp. 235-237.

[79]The 47th Regular Convention of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, New York, New York, July 7-14, 1967, Proceedings, Minutes of Session 4, July 9, 1967.

words of The Christian Century, "cast a pall over the convention; at least there was no sign of such advances as were made by the 1965 convention in Detroit."[80]

Reasons for this somewhat gloomy assessment are not difficult to find. Despite the passage of a resolution to the effect that the Scriptural and confessional basis for fellowship with the American Lutheran Church did exist, it was decided that final action declaring "fellowship" would be deferred to the Denver convention of 1969.[81] One of the leaders in the floor fight over A.L.C. fellowship was a St. Louis seminary professor, Robert Preus, brother of the future synodical president Jacob A. O. Preus, who in 1967 was president of Missouri's seminary at Springfield, Illinois. Robert Preus had been educated in the A.L.C. and now charged that body with moving away from the doctrine of Scriptural inerrancy.[82]

Along with the "inerrancy" issue, another conservative charge was that the American Lutherans tolerated "un-Christian" and "anti-Christian" societies.

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[80] The Christian Century, LXXXIV, 23 (August 16, 1967), 1052.

[81] Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1967. Resolution 3-23, pp. 102, 103.

[82] The Christian Century, loc. cit.

This was a reference to lodge members of Masonic orders and similar secret societies being permitted communicant membership in A.L.C. churches, a practice rather vigorously forbidden in the Missouri Synod.[83]

The convention voted to continue the study of possible affiliation with such groups as the Lutheran World Federation, the Lutheran Church in America, and the World Council of Churches. All three of these questions were turned over to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, thus deferring any action for the foreseeable future.[84] To provide guidance in avoiding what it referred to as the "twin dangers of unionism and separation" the convention adopted a document entitled the "Theology of Fellowship" which encouraged inter-Lutheran welfare agencies and other non-binding activities short of outright union or, as the document put it, "to the extent that the Word of God and conscience will allow."[85] The executive secretary of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, Richard Jungkuntz, said this meant that Missouri could join the World Council of Churches and the National Council

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[83]Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1967. Resolution 3-22 (part III).

[84]Ibid. Resolutions 3-36, 3-18, 3-19, pp. 99-101.

[85]Ibid. Resolution 2-13, p. 91.

of Churches because they were "federations" rather than "fellowships" that involved the pulpit and the altar. This was a bit too sweeping for the delegates. A special resolution was passed stipulating that the Missouri Synod has no official ties whatsoever with the National Council of Churches.

There was still enough of the Cleveland and Detroit spirit to deal with matters that may be classified as social action-oriented. The key move in this series was the establishment of a full-time director for the social action agency set up at the Cleveland convention.[86]

While the Synod maintained the traditional view of the Scriptural validity of capital punishment, it was beginning to speak out on such public issues as open housing, fair employment, peaceful civil disobedience, the wars in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, conscientious objection and similar matters.[87] Though it is true that the resolutions speaking to these issues tended to be mild or to support traditional views on these matters, the fact that they were discussed and acted on at all was a major development. It

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[86] Ibid. Resolution 9-09, p. 150.

[87] Ibid. Resolutions 2-29, 2-35, 2-39, 9-08, 9-10, 9-12, 9-14, pp. 94, 96, 97, 150-152.

seemed to indicate that the "Mission Affirmations" adopted at Detroit[88] were being taken seriously by both the synodical administration and a sizeable percentage of delegates at New York.

Aside from the evident failure of the "Ebenezer Thank-offering," another negative point noted by Synod's executive director, Dr. Walter Wolbrecht, was the apparent trailing off of membership growth in the 1960's. Up to that time the Missouri Synod had been one of the fastest growing major denominations in the United States. In his report Wolbrecht noted that the 1966 growth rate was 1.02 percent, the lowest in a quarter of a century.[89] Whether this was through slowed down gains or accelerated losses was not clear, but he issued a call for greater concentration on outreach and less on organizations, physical plants and bickering over trivialities.[90]

In summary, it can be said that Cleveland, Detroit and New York, the first three conventions of the 1960's, appeared to mark the further development of a trend toward openness, outreach and liberalization in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. This development,

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[88]Appendix V.

[89]Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1967, The Executive Director's Report, p. 75.

[90]Ibid., p. 77.

which had its origins in the early days of the third period of the Synod's history, had manifested itself clearly in the "Statement of the Forty-four," been suppressed, and then reappeared in the form of concrete synodical action at the three conventions which have been discussed.

The question facing the Synod following New York was whether the new spirit would prevail. Some neutral observers thought they saw signs of faltering at the 1967 convention, when well organized conservatives were able to elect certain of their number to key boards and committees in preparation for the Denver convention of 1969.[91] The organizational activity during the next two years helped to shape that convention and its results.

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[91] The Christian Century, loc. cit.

CHAPTER V

THE ROAD TO DENVER

In his book, American Protestantism, Winthrop Hudson saw America, by the middle third of the twentieth century, as having reached a stage which he called the "Post-Protestant period." This was the point at which the earlier forces which had shaped Protestant America, such as immigration, evangelicalism, theological erosion, and rural concentration, combined with those of a new era to put Protestantism on the defensive.[1] In his view the last and best prospect for a recapturing of a dynamic Protestantism lay with the Lutherans. To prove his point the author indicated that by 1960 the Lutherans had, to a large degree, overcome their former fragmentation and had grouped themselves into three main bodies: The Lutheran Church in America, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, and the American Lutheran Church. All of these, particularly the Missouri Synod, had exhibited the ability to grow during the post-World War II years.[2]

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[1]Winthrop S. Hudson, American Protestantism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. vi, vii.

[2]Ibid., p. 176.

Hudson believed that because of the comparative insularity which the major Lutheran groups enjoyed in the United States, they had suffered the least attrition in terms of the theological erosion which had robbed other Protestants of the awareness of their continuity with historic Christianity. The Lutherans had the historical resources of the Christian past still available to them, and these he saw as being important if Protestantism was going to "recover." As the author puts it, among the assets available

> are a confessional tradition, a surviving liturgical structure, and a sense of community which, however much it may be a product of cultural factors, may make it easier for them ... to recover the "integrity of church membership" without which Protestants are ill-equipped to participate effectively in a dialogue of a pluralistic society.[3]

Whether this statement could be made today about American Lutheranism is a difficult question to answer. The development of a conservative-moderate struggle within the major Lutheran groups indicates that there were sizable numbers of clergy and laity, particularly in the Missouri Synod, who felt that their theological integrity was being compromised. The conservatives saw their chief antagonists as being the scholars who were

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[3] Ibid.

using their scholarship to undermine key doctrines like Scriptural "inerrancy." Equally as threatening were the Church administrators who seemingly did nothing about this problem, protected the scholars and, to make matters worse, were actively seeking Missouri's place in the ecumenical mainstream.

Following the first three Synodical conventions of the 1960's, at Cleveland, Detroit and New York, the feeling both within and outside the Missouri Synod was that the 1969 convention, scheduled to be held at Denver, would be decisive for the Synodical future. Though it was true that the 1960's had been marked thus far by a moderate spirit, moderates themselves were aware of the fact that a number of critical issues would necessarily be decided at Denver. Along with the usual memorials asking for strong doctrinal statements, the vote on the fellowship question with the American Lutheran Church would be taken. Of equal importance to many was the fact that Dr. Oliver Harms and his administration would stand for re-election. Dr. Harms, a 1926 graduate of the St. Louis seminary, had been elected to the full-time administrative position of Synodical first vice president in 1959, following a thirty-year career as a parish pastor in Houston, Texas. This career in the ministry suggested to many that, while he was certainly a conservative in a confessional sense, his approach

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toward dissidents would be conciliatory. His presidential administration, beginning at Cleveland in 1962, had proved this to be true. His presidency was marked by a pastoral, rather than an administrative, approach to various synodical problems. To some, he appeared weak in application of discipline. It was safe to assume that there would be strong opposition to both fellowship and Harms from the increasingly militant conservatives.

The conservatives were also deeply concerned about Denver. While they sincerely felt that they represented the "grass roots" of the Synod, as opposed to the "elitists" of the moderate wing, they were fearful of the traditional "grass roots" tendency to rubber-stamp administrative decisions. Jacob A. O. Preus, Synod's future president, analyzed this tendency in the following way:

> The Germanic spirit of authoritarian centralism has counter-balanced the Synod's theoretical congregationalism; the grass roots tends to be uncritical of what emanates from the professors and presidents of the denomination's "Vatican" in St. Louis.[4]

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[4]John Warwick Montgomery, "Missouri Compromise (Part III)," Christianity Today, XIII, 18 (June 6, 1969), 50. John Warwick Montgomery, Ph.D. (University of Chicago), Th.D. (Strasbourg), is a well known conservative theologian and spokesman. He originally took a degree in the library sciences before beginning his career in theology at Wittenberg University with a B.D. degree, awarded in 1958. He entered the ministry of the Lutheran

Dr. John Warwick Montgomery went on to say that the first century of Missouri's history saw pastors and laymen marching to the orthodox tune coming out of St. Louis. His contention is that while the tune has changed, the disciplined marching continues.[5]

This inclination on the part of the rank-and-file was not lost on the conservatives and self-proclaimed orthodox, such as the editor of The Christian News. In order to change Synodical direction, it would be necessary to politically capture St. Louis, that is, the Synodical administration and the primary seminary located there. The period between 1967 and 1969 saw a barrage of highly personalized attacks launched in the unofficial journals, in the hope of repudiating both fellowship and President Harms.

An exhaustive study of all aspects of the theological controversies of the period 1967-1969 is beyond the scope of this paper. But it is necessary for an understanding of the tensions in the Missouri Synod to examine a sampling of the accusations and counter-accusations as they appeared at the time. The linking of

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Church--Missouri Synod by the colloquy process and served as visiting professor at the Missouri Synod seminary at Springfield, Illinois, from 1964 to 1967. He is currently Professor of History of Christian Thought at Trinity Evangelical School, Deerfield, Illinois.

[5] Ibid.

issues to names is best understood by an examination of this tactic on its own terms.

> During the past two decades theological liberalism has infiltrated the Missouri Synod and Missouri Synod liberals in ever increasing numbers are making it clear that they will not be bound by the orthodox resolutions adopted at recent Missouri Synod conventions.[6]

This was the general approach used by Herman Otten in clarifying the situation in Synod. Quoting a study published in the July-August issue of Trans-Action, a secular social science journal, he noted that twenty-four percent of Synod's clergy rejected the "Scriptural doctrine" of inspiration and inerrancy and about 500 pastors rejected the idea that Adam and Eve were historical personages.[7] In Otten's view, the deplorable thing about these figures was that, in the face of this evidence, "Missouri Synod officers still claim that no clergyman is teaching anything contrary to the Holy Scripture and they are not tolerating any false doctrine."[8]

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[6]Herman Otten, "The Doctrinal Situation in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod," The Christian News, II, 9 (March 3, 1969), 58.

[7]Jeffrey K. Hadden, "A Protestant Paradox--Divided They Merge," Trans-Action, V, 6 (July-August, 1967), 63-69.

[8]Herman Otten, loc. cit.

Although simple, this technique was apparently successful. First, the existence of a problem was stated. Second, the existence of the problem was proven through the introduction of evidence. Third, proof was furnished that synodical officialdom was doing nothing about it, thereby becoming accessories to the promotion of heresy. The implied solution was obvious--attack both the heretic and those who protected him.

Some specific examples of this technique are instructive. The case of Dr. Martin H. Scharlemann has been discussed elsewhere in this study.[9] As it turned out, this was but the opening salvo in the campaign against the moderates.

In September, 1965, the Rev. Dr. Arthur Carl Piepkorn, a professor at the St. Louis seminary, published a study in The Concordia Theological Monthly entitled, "What Does 'Inerrancy' Mean?" the first serious treatment of this problem in an official Synodical publication since the Scharlemann affair in 1959-1962.[10] This scholarly presentation began with a clear statement that it was primarily a study of terminology rather than a theological one.[11] After giving a historical analysis

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[9] Supra, chapter IV, pp. 120-125.

[10] Arthur Carl Piepkorn, "What Does Inerrancy Mean?" Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXVI, 8 (September, 1965), 577-593.

[11] Ibid., p. 577.

of the development of this doctrine, the author pointed to what he considered the greatest danger in using the term, which neither Scripture nor the Confessional writings employed:

> But when we begin to take the term literally of the Sacred Scriptures as such, a student of comparative religion might be impelled to observe that we are perilously close to the threshold of a tendency which exists in other world religions. This is the tendency toward the deification of the written revelation of God.[12]

From that point Dr. Peipkorn went on to give reasons for abandoning the use of the term, "inerrancy." Briefly summarized they were: (1) It implied a commitment to traditional interpretations essential to the spiritual security of some. In connection with this point, the author added, "The motivation of the highly vocal publishers of certain periodicals in Lutheran circles is obviously complex, but this same kind of compulsive necessity seems to animate the insistence of them on the term 'inerrancy.'"[13] (2) The fact that inerrancy could really apply only to the original manuscripts made the use of the terms theologically irrelevant because the originals were no longer extant.[14]

While suggesting that it would not be wise to

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[12] Ibid., p. 580. [13] Ibid., p. 588.

[14] Ibid., pp. 589, 590.

deny the inerrancy of the Sacred Scripture for "pastoral reasons" and because they contained what God wished to reveal to man, he suggested that the best strategy would be to "refrain from using the term in our presentations" and simply affirm the Holy Spirit's authorship and the Scripture's truth and dependability.[15]

This article was photographically reproduced in The Christian News, with three critiques, several years later. Two of these had been written in 1965 by noted Missouri Synod theologians Dr. Robert Preus of the St. Louis seminary and Dr. John Warwick Montgomery.[16]

Dr. Montgomery's article expressed the general line of attack:

> The cry of "paper pope" has been shouted at evangelical Protestants ever since the Reformation. Today, however, one observes with amazement and with sorrow that in the very orthodox circles of ... Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, a bastion of biblical orthodoxy in the days of Theodore Engelder and W. F. Arndt ... arguments contra inerrancy once directed against the church from outside, are now advocated by faculty members themselves.[17]

A less temperate attack on Dr. Peipkorn by a Mr. Marcus Braun, in a privately published and

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[15] Ibid., pp. 591-593.

[16] "Well Said. Inerrancy: An Answer for the C.T.M. and Piepkorn," The Christian News, II, 19 (May 12, 1969), 31.

[17] John Warwick Montgomery, "The C.T.M. and Inerrancy," ibid., pp. 31 ff.

distributed pamphlet, appeared in 1967. Entitled, "A Layman's Concern about His Church," the pamphlet noted that Mr. Braun had personally confronted Dr. Peipkorn about his "attack" on the inerrancy of Scripture.[18] His report of the "confrontation" asserted that Piepkorn defended himself by saying that it would be better to use the word "true" rather than "inerrant." Braun continued:

> Upon further questioning Dr. Piepkorn revealed that he does not understand truth to be factual as you and I understand truth, but prefers to believe that the Scriptures are true in the same sense that Aesop's Fables are true ... since they demonstrate certain moral lessons for us to learn. ... As orthodox Christians we should all be warned not to fall for this type of scholastic hog wash.[19]

The pamphlet continued in this vein, referring to Dr. Piepkorn, Dr. Martin Scharlemann, Dr. Robert Smith and others at the St. Louis seminary, Synod's other colleges and Valparaiso University as "sanctimonious charlatans," "theological confidence men," and "theological liberals" who are "fraudulently accepting money and violating [their] ordination vow."[20]

Mr. Braun, by his own estimate, distributed more

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[18] Marcus R. Braun, A Layman's Concern About His Church (Kansas City, Missouri: privately printed, 1967), p. 4.

[19] Ibid. [20] Ibid., p. 20.

than 60,000 of these brochures.[21] Therefore, the Board of Control of the Seminary felt compelled to step into the case. The Synodical Board for Higher Education explained this action in these words:

> He [Marcus Braun] published and distributed his accusations a full year before approaching personally any of the seven faculty members whom he accused. There was therefore no opportunity for the faculty members or for the Board of Control to discuss these matters prior to publication. Because the Board of Control has received inquiries from every sector of Synod, asking what it is doing about answering these charges against the faculty, the following report is published.[22]

After an extensive exchange of correspondence between the Board of Control and Mr. Braun,[23] a meeting was arranged for July 5, 1968, in St. Louis. A committee of the Board had looked into the charges, studied the writings Braun had referred to in context, asked the accused professors to respond to the charges in writing and felt in its own words "satisfied that it would be possible to demonstrate to Mr. Braun's satisfaction that there had been no deviation from Biblical

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[21] "The Edifying Word," Convention Workbook (Reports and Overtures) 48th Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod (Denver, Colorado, July 11-18, 1969), p. 266. Report of the Board for Higher Education.

[22] Ibid.

[23] The correspondence is published in The Christian News, II, 19 (May 12, 1969), 8-10.

teachings."[24]

Mr. Braun agreed to the meeting and also to the suggestion that he be accompanied by his pastor and circuit counselor, but he wanted to bring along two other unidentified "counselors." The Committee saw no good purpose being served by increasing the number of participants and declined this latter request. They indicated that the meeting was to be held in "brotherly love and mutual concern for the removal of obstacles."[25]

In his reply, Braun finally named the unidentified persons he wanted as advisors. They were Rev. Hermann Otten, the editor of The Christian News, and Dr. John Baur, a regular contributor to that publication. One of the reasons offered for this move by Braun was, "Some of my documentation came from Rev. Otten's file."[26] Braun's request was denied, he refused to come without Otten and Baur, and after more letter-writing the meeting was cancelled. Stating that it believed the faculty members innocent of Braun's charges and that it stood willing to investigate charges brought against the faculty, the Board concluded, "but at the same time we

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[24] Convention Workbook, 1969, p. 267.

[25] Letter, Roland P. Wiederaenders to Marcus Braun, June 4, 1968, ibid., p. 267.

[26] Convention Workbook, loc. cit.

expect those who accuse to demonstrate a willingness to meet with us in a brotherly manner and to prove their charges or withdraw them."[27] The Board asked the 1969 convention to ratify its action. This was done at Denver, with an additional request that Mr. Braun distribute no more copies of the brochure in question.[28]

The Braun-Seminary Board of Control case is illustrative of the tactics employed by conservatives of the Otten type in the period under discussion. Drs. Piepkorn and Scharlemann were by no means the only targets. Virtually every professor in the exegetical department of the seminary came under similar attacks. Dr. Gilbert Thiele was accused of having attacked the doctrine of the resurrection of the body in an essay delivered to the faculty of the seminary and the Praesidium of the Synod.[29] Dr. Norman Habel was accused

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Proceedings of the 48th Regular Convention, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Denver, Colorado, July 11-18, 1969. Resolutions 6-21, p. 126.

[29] Gilbert A. Thiele, "Easter Hope," The Seminarian: A Student Journal of Theological Opinion and Discussion, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, XLIX, 3 (March, 1958), 15-19. Dr. Thiele stated (p. 17): "The Bible when examined in its length and breadth knows of no disembodied condition in which man lives, temporarily, and certainly not permanently; it knows of neither a temporary nor permanent human immortality as such." And, he stated again (p. 19): "Will there be some sort of mass peregrination to the throne of God, out of the depths of the sea, out of the innumerable graves,

of denying the literal historicity of the Genesis creation and the messianic interpretation of certain portions of Genesis 3, in an essay entitled, "The Form and Meaning of the Fall Narrative."[30] Dr. Robert Smith, another professor of biblical exegesis, was singled out for heresy because of an article he wrote in the Lutheran Forum. In this article he said that verbal inspiration and inerrancy did not come from Luther and the Confessions but from orthodox Lutheran "scholastics." After summarizing Dr. Smith's views The Christian News added: "With these views Dr. Smith cannot be permitted to teach in any school of the Missouri Synod, including Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. President Harms, please notice!"[31]

This type of attack, with slight variations, was carried out in issue after issue of The Christian News, The Confessional Lutheran, The Northwestern Lutheran, and the more politically oriented Through to Victory. Throughout the two years from the New York convention to

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catacombs, crypts, urns, and other places of disposal? We do not know. Important is this: We will be before the throne of God and of the Lamb." His study was purely exegetical, using Scripture in all instances.

[30]"An Illustration of Current Conflict over Proper Principles of Biblical Interpretation," Crisis in Lutheran Theology, edited by John Warwick Montgomery (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), I, 105-109.

[31]Christian News, II, 19 (May 12, 1969), 27.

the Denver convention the list of possible heretics was gradually enlarged to include men from the religion department of Synod's college at River Forest, Illinois. A few examples of the statements and positions of these men, thought to be untenable and/or heretical by the conservative camp, once again illustrates the techniques of that group.

Professor Albert Glock, in an essay entitled, "The Study and Interpretation of the Old Testament" apparently subscribed to the JEDP source-hypothesis: "Living in the sixth century, making the ancient material relevant for the Old Testament people of that era, 'P' not only provided a commentary of 'JE', but also presents a significant theological system."[32]

Dr. Walter R. Boumann was reported to have raised "false issues" during a seminar held at Valparaiso University on creation-evolution problems: "He found fault with the theory of inspiration held by Lutheran dogmaticians which makes inspiration the 'direct communication of otherwise unknowable material.'"[33]

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[32]Albert E. Glock, "The Study and Interpretation of the Old Testament," The Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXVIII, 2 (February, 1967), p. 98.

[33]Alber Galen, "Report on Two-Day Dialog Study of Creation-Evolution Issues Held at Valparaiso University, October 21-22, 1965," Lutheran Witness Reporter, I, 21 (November 14, 1965), 5-6.

Synodically supported Valparaiso University came under attack as a repository of the evolutionary approach to the creation story. Two members of its science department, Dr. William Bloom, a River Forest graduate, and Dr. Karl Krekler, a St. Louis seminary graduate, had authored a textbook entitled General Biology.[34] This work contained such statements as, "There can be no denying the fact that there is evidence to support the hypothesis that man has evolved from prehuman ancestors,"[35] and again, "But it is clear that there need be no essential conflict between 'continuous creation' and 'theistic evolution.' Rather these two views may complement one another."[36] Naturally, the president of Valparaiso, Dr. Otto Paul Kretzmann, was guilty of condoning heresy by his refusal to take action against them.[37] The same accusation was brought against Dr. Martin L. Koehneke, president of Concordia, River Forest, and Dr. Alfred O. Fuerbringer, president of Concordia, St. Louis.[38]

Not being affiliated with a synodical school was

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[34]William Bloom and Karl H. Krekler, General Biology (New York: Van Nostrand, 1963).

[35]Ibid., p. 457. [36]Ibid., p. 438.

[37]Christian News, II, 9 (March 3, 1969), 60.

[38]Ibid., p. 61.

no guarantee of immunity from the anti-liberal campaign. Martin E. Marty was the target of an especially acrimonious series of charges ranging from his defense of premarital and extra-marital sex under specific circumstances to devising a strategy for an "ecumenical takeover" of Synod by liberals.[39] Jaroslav Pelikan, on the other hand, was castigated for claiming in his book, From Luther to Kierkegaard, that "repristinate Orthodoxy" like that of Walther and Peiper was not lasting.[40] Dr. Marty, a member of the faculty at the University of Chicago, and Pelikan, Titus Street Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Yale, were both post-World War II graduates of the St. Louis seminary and still listed on the official roster of Missouri Synod clergy.[41]

These attacks, or public disclosures, were emphasized in virtually every issue of journals like The Christian News during the post-New York convention period.[42] All of this backsliding, disloyalty to what

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Christian News, IV, 21 (June 14, 1971), 5.

[41] Roster of Missouri Synod Pastors, The Lutheran Annual, 1968, edited by Otto A. Dorn (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), pp. 171, 181.

[42] See especially The Christian News, II, 9 (March 3, 1969), and II, 19 (May 12, 1969) for a summary of charges against the men and institutions mentioned in this study and others.

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was considered "sound Lutheranism" and outright heresy were laid at the doorstep of the current Synodical administration of Dr. Oliver Harms. Harms himself was not considered a "heretic" or "liberal." Rather he was pictured as a dedicated man beset by difficult problems and bad advisers.

In an editorial published in May, 1969, just two months prior to the Denver convention, Herman Otten gave a personal assessment of Dr. Harms:

> The Harms years tell of a man who desired more than anything else to do his Lord's work. He inherited problems which he attempted to conquer, but advisers gave wrong interpretations of events and were a strong influence in aborting his original mission to set a right course. Today he is caught up in a defense of the web in which he had been caught by advisers who directed Synod's course into liberalism. Today he is a victim of circumstances, but the Synod cannot survive if the same man is at the helm.[43]

After reviewing the deviations from "historic Lutheran" positions and naming the misleading advisers as Dr. Walter Wolbrecht, Synod's executive director, and Rev. Arnold Wessler, the president's administrative assistant, who were accused of protecting deviationists from disciplinary proceedings, Otten concluded the editorial:

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[43]Herman Otten, "A Man and His Mission," Christian News, II, 18 (May 5, 1969), 1.

> The President has had the constitutional responsibility to demand that Synodical and District officials fulfill their responsibilities in all these cases. No correction or disciplinary action has been made. The Synod cannot survive a continuation of direction from the President's advisers, Wolbrecht and Wessler. This factual account is not pleasant to print, but it is already printed in the minds of many throughout Synod.[44]

To illustrate the practical results of the influence of "evil counselors" on the Harms administration, Otten cited the following "Highlights of the Harms Years": (1) The Missouri Synod joined its first ecumenical endeavor, the Lutheran Council in the USA; (2) The Commission on Theology recommended membership in the Lutheran World Federation; (3) Synod declared that the basis for fellowship with The American Lutheran Church existed; (4) Synod opened talks with the Lutheran Church in America; (5) Dr. Walter Bouman received tenure at River Forest in spite of conservative protest; (6) Dr. Norman Habel received tenure at the St. Louis seminary despite his views on Genesis; (7) Congregations and pastors were leaving Synod in protest over impending A.L.C. fellowship and liberalism at the St. Louis seminary; (8) Foreign mission work failed to expand; (9) Synod failed to meet financial obligations; (10) First

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[44] Ibid.

decrease in adult converts; (11) A decline in parochial school enrollment. All of this was attributed to the Harms administration.[45]

The June 23, 1969, issue of The Christian News carried a headline endorsement of Jacob A. O. Preus for president of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. The accompanying story explained the paper's position:

> Correspondence and reports from many sections of the synod reveal a strong groundswell for Preus, a seminary president who is generally regarded by evangelicals as a level headed and forward looking leader for the Missouri Synod.[46]

Besides the record of the Harms administration, the other burning issue as the Synod moved toward the Denver convention was the prospective declaration of fellowship with the American Lutheran Church.

Resolution 3-23, adopted at the New York convention, had recognized the existence of a Scriptural and confessional basis for a declaration of altar and pulpit fellowship between Missouri and the A.L.C.[47] The same resolution decided to defer final action in order to allow two years to work out difficulties in practice

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Christian News, II, 25 (June 25, 1969), 1.

[47] Missouri Synod Proceedings, 1967. Resolutions 3-23, pp. 102-103.

between the two bodies, particularly in the area of "unchristian and anti-Christian societies." The president of Synod was then to make "the appropriate recommendations" at the Denver Convention.[48] During the interim between New York and Denver, President Harms' office arranged for a Synod-wide discussion of the fellowship issue on the basis of materials provided by his office. These discussions were to culminate with presentations to district conventions in 1968, under the leadership of synodical vice presidents and members of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations.[49]

Simultaneously the President's office arranged with officials of the American Lutheran Church for joint meetings at various levels. The findings of these meetings and those of individual pastors and congregations, along with a statement from the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, were presented to the district presidents. While noting that some diversities still existed in the practice of the two bodies, the Council of Presidents, in an unannounced majority, voted to concur in President Harms' recommendation for proclaiming

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Missouri Synod Proceedings, 1969. The President's Report, pp. 49-50.

fellowship ties with the A.L.C.[50]

In the face of the rising criticism of his actions and administration, Dr. Harms was clearly staking his own future on the A.L.C. fellowship issue. The "Declaration of Fellowship" was by no means a certain winner in the coming convention.

The moderate group in the Missouri Synod campaigned for the fellowship resolution on the basis of a paper entitled "Theology of Fellowship" issued by the Commission on Theology and Church Relations at the Detroit convention.[51] Central to the position of this paper, reported Dr. Richard Jungkuntz, executive secretary of the Commission, was that

> the basis for pulpit and altar fellowship ... is set forth in Augustana, the primary confession of Lutheranism, Art. VII, "and to the true unity of the church, it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of sacraments."[52]

This position paper was adopted at the 1967 convention for "reference and guidance" and was pronounced to be a

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[50] Ibid. The Recommendation itself is found in The 1969 Convention Workbook, as Recommendation 3-01, "Recommendation of President and Council of Presidents on ALC Fellowship," pp. 94-95.

[51] Missouri Synod Proceedings, 1965, pp. 264-291.

[52] Richard Jungkuntz, "The Lutheran Quest for a More Visible Unity," Christianity Today, XIII, 18 (June 6, 1969), 5-6.

document that is "a sound presentation of the basic Biblical, theological, historical, and practical principles of Christian fellowship."[53]

In answer to charges that simple agreement on the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments was watering down the traditional requirements for fellowship, Dr. Jungkuntz replied that "this is no reductionist principle,"[54] as could be proven by a look at the full report of his commission. This report, after stating the Gospel-sacrament principle as being the only absolute demand for unity, went on to say,

> All articles of faith are integrally related to the Gospel and articulate the Gospel from different perspectives. Consequently the preaching of the Gospel according to a pure understandingof it is not possible where any article of faith is either falsified or denied.[55]

Jungkuntz further reported that a summary of official reports from the Synod's constituency showed that in almost all the areas where the question was studied and discussed as Dr. Harms had recommended "67 to 75 per cent of the congregations found they agreed that the

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[53] Missouri Synod Proceedings, 1967. Resolution 2-13, p. 91.

[54] Jungkuntz, loc. cit.

[55] Ibid.

scriptural and confessional basis for fellowship exists. About 75 per cent agreed that such consensus should lead to the proclaiming of fellowship."[56]

Along with the attacks on "unfaithful" professors, "intellectuals" and "misguided" administrators, the conservatives saw the fellowship issue as a rallying point. The fact that it was a clear-cut issue which constituted a visible break with Missouri's past history made it vulnerable. Moreover, in opposing fellowship, the more vocal critics of the Harms administration could be reasonably assured of at least tacit support from some of the most highly respected Missouri Synod theologians, among them Jacob A. O. Preus. In February, 1969, Preus told a pastoral conference that major obstacles stood in the way of Missouri-A.L.C. fellowship and that he could not "see any hope of having all the problems sufficiently settled by July so that we could honestly say that we are one in doctrine and practice with the A.L.C."[57]

Preus was joined in this skeptical attitude toward A.L.C. fellowship by his brother, Dr. Robert Preus, a respected member of the St. Louis seminary

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[56] Ibid.

[57] Lutheran Witness Reporter, V, 3 (February, 1969), 8.

faculty. In an essay delivered at the June, 1968, convention of Synod's Missouri District, he called attention to his "Fellowship Concerns" and certain "roadblocks" that New York Resolution 3-23 had neglected to take into account. These barriers were the following: (1) The problem of lodge practice. (2) A.L.C. involvement in the ecumenical movement, particularly its relationship to the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches. (3) The fact that the A.L.C. practiced de facto fellowship with the Lutheran Church in America, at least on a selective basis. (4) Unresolved doctrinal differences, especially the doctrine of conversion and man's activity in that action. (5) The doctrine of the authority, inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. Here Robert Preus claimed that the A.L.C., in practice, had radically changed its position from that of twenty-five years before.[58]

In concluding his essay Dr. Preus quoted another scholarly opponent of fellowship:

> Dr. Hermann Sasse has said somewhere, "The most important question facing the Lutheran Church today is: Do we want to remain Lutheran?" This is a vital and highly relevant question today for us in

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[58]Robert D. Preus, "Fellowship Concerns," an address delivered at the First Convention of the Missouri District of the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, June 24-28, 1968. Convention Proceedings, pp. 27-43.

> the Missouri Synod and also for the American Lutheran Church. If our earnest answer to this question is yes ..., then in all our efforts toward unity and fellowship among Lutherans we will make every effort to resolve past differences in the doctrine of the Gospel, we will conscientiously warn against false doctrine today, and we will work patiently for agreement "in the doctrine and all its articles" before entering into outward fellowship.[59]

In February, 1969, a study was published by Jeffrey K. Hadden, entitled The Gathering Storm in the Churches. Dr. Hadden, a professor of Sociology at Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, surveyed the attitudes of Protestant clergymen towards some of the basic doctrines of historic Christianity. Included in his study were 903 clergy of the A.L.C. and 895 of the Missouri Synod. The results of the survey seemed to indicate that there was somewhat of a divergence between A.L.C. and Missouri clergy on certain traditional articles of faith. In responding to a question pertaining to Scriptural inerrancy, forty-three percent of the A.L.C. clergy agreed that Scripture was inerrant, while seventy-six percent of Missourian clergy agreed.[60] When "inerrancy" was expanded to include historical,

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[59] Ibid., p. 43. Dr. Herman Sasse was a German theologian and co-author of Accents in Luther's Theology.

[60] Jeffrey K. Hadden, The Gathering Storm in the Churches (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Company, 1969), p. 42.

geographic, and other secular matters, Missourians held steady at seventy-six percent, while the A.L.C. clergy dropped to twenty-three percent affirmation.[61] While the percentages varied from point to point, Hadden concluded that Missouri Synod Lutherans "remained consistently the most conservative or literalist denomination."[62]

A further note of some interest in Hadden's study was his analysis of the younger clergy of the two Lutheran groups: "In every denomination, younger clergy have a more liberal view regarding the interpretation of Scripture than do older age groups. Only in the Missouri Synod do we fail to observe significant age shifts."[63] He reported that seventy-two percent of Missouri clergy under age thirty-five accepted a literal interpretation of Scripture, compared with eighty-four percent of the older clergymen. In the A.L.C. only six percent under thirty-five accepted "inerrancy" in its traditional sense, compared to sixty-three percent of the younger Missouri clergy.[64]

While the divergencies reported by Hadden were not entirely unexpected, they did provide ammunition for the conservative press campaign against fellowship and

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[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid., p. 48.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Ibid., p. 251.

Dr. Harms, who was supporting fellowship. In assessing the Hadden study, Herman Otten had this to say:

> The somewhat more than a thousand liberal Missouri Synod Clergymen who cannot accept the inerrancy of the Bible should join the A.L.C. where the vast majority reject this Christian doctrine. ... The slightly more than a thousand A.L.C. clergymen who accept the inerrancy of Holy Scripture should join the LCMS.[65]

This call for a re-alignment of Lutheranism in the United States along liberal-conservative lines does not seem to have been taken seriously by any large group in Synod. One does not find it in the available writings of the Preus brothers, or of those pastors and professors who identified with their conservative views. While individual laymen, pastors and congregations threatened to leave Synod if Harms were reelected, if fellowship were approved, or if ties with LCUSA were not dissolved, the most common and perhaps most influential development was that of new organizations within Synod designed to gain control of synodical administrative machinery.

One such organization was "Balance," organized at Springfield, Illinois, shortly before the Denver convention, and responsible for the circulation of a

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[65] Christian News, II, 9 (March 3, 1969), 53.

newsletter entitled Balance. This conservative publication, whose founders were unknown until after the convention, was circulated among 25,000 members of Synod, including the convention delegates.[66] As it turned out, Balance, which hit hard on all the manifestations of liberalism in Missouri, numbered Jacob A. O. Preus and Robert Preus among its founders and officers.[67]

The net effect of the campaigns waged by organizations such as those which published Balance and The Christian News is difficult to measure, but the Denver convention was approached in a spirit of acrimonious polarization that was new to the Missouri Synod. Strong differences of opinion had always been part of convention decision-making in the past, but never had the issues been as clear cut, personality-centered, and well publicized as those to be dealt with at Denver.

At convention time, a group of conservatives took out an advertisement in a Denver paper pushing the candidacy of J. A. O. Preus. Conservatives walked into the convention wearing fishhooks in their lapels indicating their commitment to Preus' candidacy and that of a publicized slate of conservative candidates for other

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[66] Christian News, III, 35 (September 7, 1970), 4.

[67] Ibid.

high Synodical offices.[68]

This type of political activity was without precedent in Synodical history. In his executive secretary's report, delivered on the first day of the convention, Dr. Walter Wolbrecht, identified by conservatives as one of the "evil counselors" around Dr. Harms, called attention to "undemocratic practices and irregular procedures" out of keeping with Synod's constitution and traditions.[69] "Never before in the annals of the Missouri Synod has there been an open and avowed candidacy for the top office of the church body in advance of an electing convention."[70] The minutes record that he was given a standing ovation.[71]

Dr. Preus was given the floor later the same day and

> disavowed actions taken without his knowledge, stating that the issue was not one of personalities. He declared that he deplored politicking and pleaded that the delegates demonstrate their love toward one another and toward the Lord. He received a standing ovation.[72]

After two inconclusive ballots, Preus was elected on

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[68]Woodward, op. cit., p. 4.

[69]Missouri Synod Proceedings, 1969, p. 20.

[70]Woodward, loc. cit.

[71]Missouri Synod Proceedings, 1969, p. 20.

[72]Ibid.

the third.[73]

Dr. Preus was a graduate of Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, and the Luther Seminary of St. Paul, Minnesota, both institutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which he left in a dispute over doctrinal matters. He became attached to the Norwegian Lutheran Church and had personally taken a leading role in that church's move to suspend fellowship with Missouri. In 1958 he was given a release from the Norwegian group to accept an appointment as professor of Latin and Greek at the Missouri Synod's seminary at Springfield, Illinois. He shortly became president of that institution, a position he held at the time of his election to the Missouri Synod presidency.[74]

This repudiation of the Harms administration on the first day of the convention was apparently a tremendous coup for The Christian News and Balance forces and seemed predictive of a conservative sweep on the other crucial issues facing delegates. Missouri normally did not defeat incumbents.

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[73] Ibid., p. 22. Of the 939 votes cast, Dr. Preus received an unannounced majority over four other candidates from a list of twenty-four names originally placed in nomination. These four finalists were Victor Behnken, Oliver R. Harms, Theodore F. Nickel and Edwin C. Weber. A motion to make the election of Preus unanimous was defeated. Another motion to reveal the tabulation of votes was defeated also.

[74] Woodward, op. cit., p. 6.

In an editorial in The Christian Century, Martin Marty paid a glowing tribute to Dr. Harms following his defeat, which gives an interesting moderate analysis of the reasons it happened: "Only once in twelve years have I, M. E. M., a card-carrying member of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, used Century pages to comment on my church's affairs. The second time for such comment has come." Describing Dr. Harms as "a devoted and loving servant of the church," Marty says, "he has been to mavericks like me--knee jerk liberals and radical inactivists?--a sort of father figure."[75]

> President Harms recently paid dearly for his virtues and his policies. ... Because he wanted Missourians to begin to notice other Christians, and he did not want to "do in" church members who disagreed with him. But the promise of the end of isolation was a threat to some, and his distaste for purges of people they did not like angered his enemies. So he was cast off.[76]

Dr. Marty then said that Harms' defeat was a tribute to him for apparently standing alone against the spirit of particularism: "If his admirers had spoken up for him, their defense would only have hurt his leadership--so poisoned was the atmosphere with 'guilt by association' venom."[77]

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[75]Martin E. Marty, "One of the Good Guys," Christian Century, LXXXVI, 33 (August 13, 1969), 1077.

[76]Ibid. [77]Ibid.

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Prior to the vote on fellowship with the A.L.C., conducted on the sixth day of the convention, President-elect J. A. O. Preus addressed the convention.

> He voiced a concern particularly for the doctrine of the Word of God, saying he favored a delay [on fellowship] to give an opportunity for further study on this subject. However, he promised to abide by the decision of this convention and to use strenuous efforts to draw all Lutherans into a consensus on fellowship.[78]

The vote was then taken and announced the next morning. Five hundred and twenty-two had voted for Resolution 3-15, calling for A.L.C. fellowship, with 438 in opposition. The resolution had carried.[79] Harms had been repudiated, but his chief policy had been confirmed. The minutes of this session also noted,

> President-elect Preus stated that the Synod had spoken and he will support its position and will carry out its wishes. He will set about the work of healing. ... He asked for the support and prayers of the Synod. The statement resulted in a standing ovation.[80]

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[78] Missouri Synod Proceedings, p. 32. Minutes of Session 11.

[79] Ibid. Minutes of Session 12.

[80] Ibid. There is no evidence of a "deal" between Preus and his supporters and those who supported A.L.C. fellowship. The president-elect had long been identified as an opponent of fellowship without agreement in doctrine and practice, and had spoken to that effect at Denver. Furthermore, Synod's polity would make such last minute dealing extremely difficult.

This step, though momentous, was not followed by a stampede to join other groups of an ecumenical nature. One day later a resolution calling for an application for membership in the Lutheran World Federation was decisively defeated by a vote of 620 to 272.[81] The Synod also declined to take positive action on membership in the World Council of Churches or to do more than make a further study of the National Council of Churches.[82]

Ros Jensen, a member of the Missouri Synod and an editorial staff member of The Lutheran Witness, writing a convention summary in The Christian Century, claimed that the elections were the dominant feature of Denver and stressed the role of Herman Otten's Christian News:

> An important factor in the elections was the influence of Christian News, a weekly gossip sheet edited by Herman Otten. ... After the election results were announced, a newsman found that at least 52 of the 69 candidates either endorsed by or listed as acceptable to Christian News had won Synodical offices. After his election Preus repudiated the support of Christian News. When a reporter asked him why he hadn't done that before the convention, he said that he had indeed thought about doing so but had feared that a complaint might be misrepresented by the editor.[83]

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[81] Ibid. Resolution 3-14, p. 96.

[82] Ibid. Resolutions 3-04 and 3-06, p. 94.

[83] Ros Jensen, "Missouri Synod Survives the Strain," Christian Century, LXXXVI, 33 (August 13, 1969), 1073.

In concluding his summation, Jensen added, "So far there has been no evidence that Preus is enthusiastic about witch hunting. Likewise, there have been no reports of any major exodus of progressives from the church. So it is possible that despite the commotion at Denver the Missouri Synod has once more resisted major change."[84]

Christianity Today reported that Preus "intimated that he is impatient with theological nit-pickers and eager to get on with the central teaching of the Bible: The Gospel."[85]

The Christian News, while taking a dim view of the passage of Resolution 3-15, and a bit miffed at Preus's repudiation of its support, editorially rejoiced at the Denver results. It was, after all, being held responsible for Harms' defeat, even by its severest critics. Claiming that it was now "a time to take a stand" and "a time for thanks, unity, missions, honesty and openness," Otten proceeded to analyze the reasons for the Preus victory. After pleading with conservatives not to bolt Synod over the fellowship vote, he noted that the Harms administration had fallen because of liberalism in the colleges and seminary, bad advisors

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[84] Ibid.

[85] "Missouri Extends a Hand," Christianity Today, XIII, 22 (August 1, 1969), 35.

"like Wolbrecht, Wessler, Fuerbringer and Jungkuntz," declining membership growth and the lack of mission spirit in a doctrinally divided church.[86]

In the same editorial Otten listed a five-point plan for unity in the future: (1) True unity could exist in a church even without complete agreement on matters not mentioned in Scripture. (2) Missouri Synod liberals should be given a chance to retract their heretical positions; if they could not, they should leave Synod; if they refused to leave, "then formal charges will have to be filed against them or against any officials who protect them." (3) The Missouri Synod should take the lead in establishing an orthodox International Lutheran Conference. (4) Missouri should take the lead in organizing all orthodox Lutherans in America. (5) Missouri should immediately reestablish fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod and other conservative Lutheran groups. Above all, it was important,"to give President Preus and his vice-presidents an opportunity to deal with the tremendous crisis they now face in a church which no one can longer deny is seriously divided."[87]

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[86]"After Denver: A Time to Take a Stand," Christian News, II, 29 (July 21, 1969), 4.

[87]Ibid., pp. 5, 6.

A somewhat less optimistic view of the convention results and Missouri's future is found in a letter written by the Rev. Wayne Saffen, campus pastor at the University of Chicago, and a frequent target of attack by Otten and The Christian News for his "liberalism," "universalism," and social involvement.[88] This letter to the editor of The Christian News was given the title "Lutheran Church--Preus-Otten Synod," and began,

> Congratulations to you and Christian News on the July Putsch ... which toppled the Evangelical incumbents and installed the reactionary cabal of legalistic ideologists in their stead. The "Harms-Wolbrecht Synod" [so designated by Herman Otten] had now become the "Preus-Otten Synod" in one swift, legitimate, decisive blow.[89]

Paying tribute to Otten's propaganda techniques, Saffen wrote: "Truth had nothing to do with it; but it was an impressive power play exhibiting the new rule of Missouri Synod politics: any ends justify any means."[90]

Saffen then expressed grave doubts about the future under Preus, beginning with the accusation that Preus had purged the Springfield seminary of moderates. He continued by bringing up Preus' involvement with Balance and his refusal to disavow support from sources

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[88] Christian News, IV, 19 (May 31, 1971), 1.

[89] Letter from Wayne Saffen, Christian News, II, 30 (July 28, 1969), 11.

[90] Ibid.

like The Christian News until the election was over. He concluded his appraisal of Preus by saying: "There is no credibility gap, because with many of us, Preus has never been credible to begin with. He begins his reign under a cloud of distrust which we do not think he has the capacity for truth to dissipate."[91]

Saffen then made the prognosis that Preus would virtually implement The Christian News' program. He predicted a "purge" at the St. Louis seminary and the college at River Forest and a replacement of "the real theologians with safe, party-line hacks." This would be followed by the removal of men like Wolbrecht, Wessler, Fuerbringer, Marty, Scharlemann, Pelikan, Jungkuntz, Piepkorn, Saffen and others from positions of influence in Synod, and from Synod itself.[92]

He concludes this bitter assessment with a reference to his own problem with Otten over the issue of "universalism."

> One canard should now be laid to rest. Nobody in the Missouri Synod teaches universalism. The fact of the matter is that everyone will go to heaven but the Missouri Synod Lutherans. They will go to hell but will think it is heaven because they are there by themselves.[93]

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[91] Ibid. [92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid.

Actually, there seemed to be a division of opinion among Synod's moderates as to the direction the Preus administration would take. As Martin Marty said in his tribute to Dr. Harms,

> The Synod inched away from isolation and toward fellowship with other Christians and Harms's enemies will soon find that his successor also has no taste for purges. Indeed the successor himself said so at once. Like Harms, he will find himself dealing with persons and not merely propositions. He will have to seek orderly change, steady advance from the mythic, static past. He, too, will want to judge people by their fruits and not by their protestations of orthodoxy alone. All these were the ingredients of Dr. Harms' approach.[94]

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[94]Martin E. Marty, loc. cit.

CONCLUSION

In 1969, for the first time since the Cleveland convention of 1962, moderate elements in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod were unsure of their relationship to the administration of their church, as represented by Dr. J. A. O. Preus and the vice presidents elected at Denver. Dr. Preus' past record, and the reputation of many who supported his candidacy, led many to assume that the "new spirit" of the Harms administration, praised by Dr. Scharlemann and others, would be stamped out.

The fact that conservatives intended to continue their offensive against the encroachment of liberalism, specifically Resolution 3-15 proclaiming fellowship with the American Lutheran Church, was attested to by the almost immediate formation of a group whose aim was rescinding this action. One day after the passage of the resolution, a committee was formed to organize conservatives for the continuation of the "struggle for a truly confessional stand on Scripture." Their aim was not to bolt Synod, as many had previously threatened, but to work for "reconciliation." A so-called "war chest" to finance their program of turning back

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fellowship and liberalism was to be established at Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.[1]

The Lutheran Forum, published by the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau and numbering among its editors or associates prominent Missouri Synod "moderates" such as Arthur Carl Piepkorn, F. Dean Lueking, Richard Koenig, Martin Marty, Wayne Saffen, and the president-elect of the St. Louis seminary, John Tietjen, noted the impact of Denver and their future task:

> The real tragedy of Denver was the ability of the traditionalists to constrict or suppress the valiant strivings of the Church to meet the world where it is with the Gospel of Christ. ... Missouri's first order of business after Denver is to rout out once and for all the source of the suspicion, fear and hatred which infect the Synod and cripple its attempts to serve. This means the neutralization of such publications as Christian News, but more importantly, increased dialogue between the various elements of the Synod in the interest of mutual trust and understanding.[2]

The Forum article then expressed some doubts and misgivings about the newly elected president of Synod, although they were more temperate than those expressed by Wayne Saffen in his letter to The Christian News.[3]

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[1] "Fellowship Reverberations," Christianity Today, XIII, 23 (August 22, 1969), 37.

[2] Richard E. Koenig, "Missouri, A.D., is Different," Lutheran Forum, III, 8 (September, 1969), 3.

[3] Supra, chapter V.

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As to the immediate future, "no one really knows, but in the long run there is no doubt that as President Preus told a press conference, the 'church has been set on a new course.'"[4] Describing Preus as a relative newcomer, a reference to his comparatively recent affiliation with the Missouri Synod, the journal said that his chief problem was Synod's tendency

> toward a biblicism which stands in sharp contrast to a genuinely Lutheran doctrine of the Word. Politically, he will have to prove that he is not a creature of the Christian News. If he wisely realizes it is precisely the Synod's diversity which is its strength, his election could turn out to have some positive significance for Synod despite the painful circumstances under which it came about. ... Those who opposed his election will be watching for signs that President Preus really knows his church and is truly committed to reconciliation.[5]

Some signs of the direction Dr. Preus' administration would take were beginning to appear by the end of September, 1969. In a secretive meeting at the Synod's offices in St. Louis (September 24 to 26) Synod's Board of Directors, by a vote of 8 to 6, decided not to reappoint Dr. Walter Wolbrecht as the Executive Director of Synod, the chief administrative post of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. Wolbrecht, who in his report

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[4] Koenig, loc. cit.

[5] Ibid.

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to the Denver convention had delivered a scathing denunciation of the politicking being carried on in behalf of Dr. Preus' candidacy,[6] had long been a "protector of liberal professors' and a synodical personal 'empire builder,'" according to Christian News. Thus, he had been a primary target for dismissal or replacement.[7]

The post of Executive Director constitutionally had great potential power, including as it did control over budget-making, personnel supervision and policy administration and coordination.[8] On the strength of this power potential, and the fact that he had staunchly supported Dr. Harms during his term and for re-election, Dr. Wolbrecht had been termed the political "boss" of the Missouri Synod. The synodical constitution nowhere specifies the length of term of this office,[9] and Dr. Wolbrecht's contract granted him permanent tenure in the job, which he had held since 1961. Wolbrecht, therefore, refused to step aside and indicated that he would take the decision to Synod's Board of Appeals and,

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[6] Supra, chapter V

[7] "The Boss vs. The Missouri Synod," Christian News, II, 40 (October 6, 1969), 5.

[8] Handbook of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, 1969, p. 55, sec. 2.91.

[9] Ibid.

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if necessary, to the civil courts as well. The Board of Directors rescinded their decision in the face of this action, but they established a set of "guidelines" which severely restricted the Executive Director's power. In effect, the guidelines required Dr. Wolbrecht to speak, act, or represent the denomination at meetings only when directed to do so by the president or the Board of Directors.[10] Martin Marty, in reaction to this development, offered a somber observation: "It may be a sign that night is beginning to fall in the church,"[11] he said.

One month later, Dr. Richard Jungkuntz was dropped from his position as full-time Executive Secretary of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations by a 14-7 vote of Commission members. This Commission had brought in the fellowship resolution for synodical approval. Jungkuntz and Preus had apparently clashed a number of times, as fellow members of the C.T.C.R., and at the first meeting of that group following Preus' election Jungkuntz was surprised to find the matter of his re-appointment brought up. Unfortunately for Dr. Jungkuntz, the Detroit Convention of Synod, upon

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[10] Lutheran Witness Reporter, V, 19, (October 5, 1969), 15.

[11] Chicago Sun-Times, October 9, 1969, p. 42.

establishing this post had specified a four-year term for the office.[12] The possibility of re-appointment was not precluded and in Missouri Synod practice could ordinarily be expected. But these were not ordinary times or circumstances. Jungkuntz, described as a "promising young scholar," by The Christian Herald,[13] had favored eventual synodical affiliation with the Lutheran World Federation. The Christian News voiced the opinion that "Jungkuntz was a leading spokesman for the liberal faction in the C.T.C.R."

> The dismissal is generally regarded as a victory for Synod's conservatives who insist that all LCMS professors must teach the inerrancy of the Bible. Jungkuntz did not accept the Missouri Synod's doctrine of the inerrancy of Holy Scripture and maintained that the Synod should allow professors to teach that the first five books of the Bible came from certain sources designated as J-E-D and P.[14]

In a letter to the pastors and teachers of Synod, Dr. Preus complimented Jungkuntz on his years of service and regretted the "deeply traumatic experience" this was for Jungkuntz. Nevertheless, he defended the action: "We will also need to uphold the legitimacy of the elective process and the right of the Synod to set its policies in convention and to expect boards and

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[12] Missouri Synod Proceedings, 1965, p. 97, Resolution 2-15.

[13] Woodward, op. cit., p. 6.

commissions to execute them."[15]

Unlike Wolbrecht, Dr. Jungkuntz chose not to appeal the case. He was immediately offered a teaching post at the St. Louis seminary. The faculty voted to give him immediate tenure, but his appointment had to be approved by four electors, one of whom was Preus.

> As soon as he was called before them for the screening process, Jungkuntz was asked if he intended to appeal the decision to drop him from C.T.C.R. Jungkuntz replied that the question "sounded like a bribe" and he considered it inappropriate in a review of his academic suitability for the seminary post.

He failed of election and, despite a second effort and assurances by Dr. John Tietjen, the new president of the seminary, that Jungkuntz would not appeal, the appointment was not made.[16] In May, 1970, Jungkuntz was appointed provost of Pacific Lutheran University, an A.L.C. institution, by Dr. Eugene Wiegman, a River Forest graduate. Jungkuntz accepted "with joy and eagerness to begin."[17]

Richard Koenig noted:

> Professional staff are not the only ones being dismissed by the new administration.

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[15]Jacob A. O. Preus, "Brother to Brother," circular letter to clergy and teachers of Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, December 5, 1969. In possession of the author.

[16]Woodward, loc. cit.

[17]Richard E. Koenig, Missouri--Free, United, Evangelical, VIII (n.d.), p. 1.

> Those eliminated from Synodical service via failure to reappoint include such prominent names as Dr. Carl Gaertner, Dr. Herbert Boumann, Dr. Adalbert R. Kretzmann [who, incidentally, was a surviving member of the "Forty-four"], and Dr. Robert Bertram. In their places the new administration has put its own people with little regard for the kind of "balance" Dr. Harms used to strive for.[18]

The next few months were marked by resignations of a number of men who worked in the publications and communications fields of the Synod. Included in these were three members of the editorial staff of The Lutheran Witness and The Lutheran Witness Reporter: Omar Stuenkel, Ros Jensen and Kenneth Lindsay.

A St. Louis newspaper interviewed Stuenkel on the reasons for his resignation and re-entry into the parish ministry. His replies give an interesting analysis of the situation in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

> Stuenkel said technological advances have caused the Missouri Synod to fear that the old values "are going by the boards." "This has tended to make the church restrictive in its discussions of controversial issues." He accused the Synod of placing restrictions on issues that create tensions. Stuenkel said he has observed a "restrictive temper" for the last four years, but in recent months, he said, this feeling has intensified throughout the church. The forty-nine year old editor said nearly all church periodicals are faced with declining circulation "probably

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[18] Ibid.

> due to a loss of institutional loyalty." The appointment of the Rev. Dr. Jacob A. O. Preus as president of the denomination last summer is one indication of the conservative trend apparent in the church, Stuenkel said.[19]

This apparent unwillingness to have the "boat rocked" by anyone was exemplified a few months earlier when the Council of Presidents of the Lutheran Church --Missouri Synod issued a statement to all of Synod's members denouncing The Christian News. Topping the list of signers was the name of Jacob A. O. Preus, followed by those of the forty-two administrators of the Synodical districts, a number of whom had supported Preus' candidacy and had themselves expressed misgivings about liberalizing tendencies in the Synod.[20]

Meanwhile the moderate elements of Synod were themselves organizing into loosely coordinated groups for the avowed purposes of: (1) Keeping Missouri free and united in the Gospel by strict adherence to its confessional basis; (2) implementing energetically Mission affirmations adopted at Detroit in 1965; and (3) sustaining and implementing fellowship with the A.L.C. and overcoming problems with other Christians.[21]

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[19]St. Louis Globe-Democrat, February 25, 1970, p. 14. Cf. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, February 24, 1970, p. 24.

[20]Statement of Council of Presidents to Members of Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, October 3, 1969. Copy in possession of the author.

[21]Richard E. Koenig, Missouri--Free, United

On February 2, 1970, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported that a group of pastors, professors, synod staff members, seminarians and laymen of the Missouri Synod had met recently in St. Louis and formed "The Committee for Openness and Trust," to work for greater freedom within the denomination. This group promptly released a statement titled, A Call to Openness and Trust.[22] This document, issued in a spirit similar to "A Statement" of 1945, reaffirmed the belief of the signers in the basic Lordship of Jesus Christ and affirmed adherence to the historic Lutheran confessions. It then called for freedom of belief in those matters the authors said were not specifically set forth in the Scriptures. In particular, the document protested the use of certain "man-made" doctrines as tests for orthodoxy and joint Christian activity.[23]

Unlike the "Statement of the Forty-four," the "Call" specified the doctrines to which they objected. These were: (1) the manner of the creation of the universe by God; (2) the authorship and literary form

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Evangelical, VI (April 15, 1970), 4.

[22]St. Louis Post-Dispatch, February 2, 1970, p. 22.

[23]A Call to Openness and Trust (St. Louis, Missouri: January 31, 1970). This document was adopted at a meeting at Unity Lutheran Church, Bel-Nor, Missouri, by the Committee for Openness and Trust. Mimeographed copy in possession of the author.

of any books of the Bible; (3) the definition of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper; (4) the moral obligation of Christians in individual or corporate action; (5) the question of factual error in the Bible; (6) the role and authority of clergy in the church.[24]

In a certain sense the moderates in Synod were beginning to employ tactics and techniques quite similar to those used by conservatives following the "crisis convention" at Cleveland, that is, they began to form unofficial groups, issue manifestos, publish newsletters, and organize themselves for the Synodical convention to be held at Milwaukee in the summer of 1971.

In a "Brother-to-Brother" communication dated February 11, 1970, Dr. Preus took note of these developments in general and of the formation of the "Openness and Trust" group in particular:

> Certain recent events have received widespread publicity in the secular press. I must comment on these events lest the church believe I am ... intimidated by the course of events. I am referring to the organization of groups such as the St. Louis-based group known as the "Committee for Openness and Trust," although there are others, too, and some of these attitudes are coming into the open more and more.
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> We are all aware of the polarization

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[24] Ibid., VI, sec. 5.

> that has existed in our church over the fellowship issue and related doctrinal points. I have pleaded that this polarization cease. ... The Council of Presidents, in the face of vigorous opposition, has repudiated "Christian News" as divisive. ...
>
> Make no mistake about this, brothers. What is at stake is not only inerrancy, but the Gospel of Jesus Christ itself, the authority of Holy Scripture, the "quia" subscription to the Lutheran Confessions, and perhaps the very continued existence of Lutheranism as a confessional and confessing movement in the Christian world.
>
> This situation cannot be ignored or endured.[25]

In a sense, Dr. Preus indicated what appeared to be the chief problems facing the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. These problems seemed to be basic and to go far beyond specific issues. Some of them may be stated in the following way: Is it possible for a church to maintain confessional integrity and yet permit varied interests, styles and concerns to exist within its body? How much agreement must there be in doctrinal matters and minutiae for a church body to retain its identity and still do Christ's work as "church?" With specific reference to the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, can it continue to move out of its historic isolation into a pluralistic society, as

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[25]Jacob A. O. Preus, Brother to Brother, February 11, 1970. Copy in possession of the author.

it has done since World War II, and yet maintain itself as a strongly confessional organization? Both sides attempted to address themselves to these questions.

The month of July, 1970, saw the public announcement of Dr. Preus' plans to investigate the doctrinal teaching of the faculty of the St. Louis seminary. This inquiry, which apparently had been announced to Synod's clergy somewhat earlier, was discussed with Robert Teuscher, a St. Louis Globe-Democrat reporter. Preus is quoted as saying: "I simply want to find out for myself what the situation is. If the charges are not substantiated then those who are making them ought to cease and desist."[26]

Dr. John Tietjen, President of the Seminary, released a statement denying charges that faculty members of his institution were teaching contrary to accepted Lutheran doctrine. His statement added:

> I regret that Dr. Preus has chosen to dignify the accusations against our seminary by conducting an investigation. The constitution and by-laws of our church body provide adequate procedures for those who have questions to raise or charges to make. An inquiry by the president of Synod is not at all necessary. However, it will demonstrate how truly Lutheran we are, and second, it will help our church clarify what it really means to be Lutheran.[27]

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[26] St. Louis Globe-Democrat, July 13, 1970, p. 14.

[27] "Tietjen's Statement," Missouri--Free, United, Evangelical, IX (July 19, 1970), 2.

It appeared that one of the primary goals sought by conservatives in electing Preus to the presidency was on the road to being realized. That objective was the "restoration of doctrinal discipline," particularly on the faculty of Synod's chief seminary. Richard Koenig analyzed the situation as of July, 1970:

> Following his election Preus sought to take a middle course between conservative and liberal factions, but recently conservative pressure has been mounting for him to take more decisive action and discipline the alleged liberals in the Synod.[28]

July of 1970 also saw the legal incorporation of a group of conservatives called "Balance, Inc." with the Milwaukee convention in view. Listed as its president was Dr. Robert Preus, the synodical president's brother and a St. Louis seminary member. In March, 1971, this group began publication of a periodical called Affirm which, although much less personalized than The Christian News, hit hard on all the crucial issues that would have to be dealt with at Milwaukee.[29]

The second issue of Affirm stated its objectives for Milwaukee quite clearly, thus summarizing the optimum conservative program. These objectives were:

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[28] Ibid., p. 3.

[29] "Affirm," Affirm, I, 1 (March, 1971), 1, 2.

(1) the capture of crucial committees and boards; (2) suspension of A.L.C. fellowship; (3) re-assessment of remaining in L.C.U.S.A.; (4) forbidding the use of the historico-critical method of biblical interpretation; (5) support for the president's investigation of the seminary; (6) ending Synodical polarization; (7) making doctrinal statements of Synod binding; (8) changing procedures for the election of presidents of Synod's colleges and seminaries; (9) creation of a better public image in the secular press.[30]

Missouri--Free, United and Evangelical had this comment on Balance, Inc.:

> That an organized faction in Synod asserts that it is the sole possessor of "true and authentic Lutheranism" against the majority decisions of Synod is not so astonishing. It has ever been this. But what is astonishing is that the faction is led by Robert Preus. ... The Synod is now in the contradictory position of being served by a president who is linked to organized groups within the Synod dedicated to the reversal of decisions which the Synod has made. President Preus has denounced groups such as "Lutherans for Openness and Trust." He has yet to repudiate Balance, Inc., which his brother now heads. One cannot help but wonder how the LC-MS ever got itself into its present position: how it will get out is an even greater mystery.[31]

This was the situation as Synod prepared to meet in

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[30]"Convention Issues," Affirm, I, 2 (April, 1971), 1, 2.

[31]Missouri--Free, United, Evangelical, X (August 16, 1970), 1.

convention at Milwaukee in July, 1971.

The deep and seemingly irreparable break between "liberal" and "conservative," "moderate" and "evangelical," is obviously the result of forces that are much more complex than simple theological disagreement. This is not to say that theological issues are unimportant or insignificant. In a church body that has prided itself on a certain unique brand of Scriptural-Confessional loyalty, theological questions are always of surpassing significance. In the Missouri Synod this is especially true because of its historic tendency to state the problems of the day and their solutions in scripturally supported propositional statements. When this was not possible, the synod generally chose not to speak at all but rather fell back on a strongly implied, though unofficial, conservative position.

In the early decades of the twentieth century unmistakable signs of future difficulties began to appear. The third and fourth generation Missouri Synod Lutheran was gradually being compelled to face problems and difficulties in addressing himself to the church's mission in the complex society into which he was being thrust. The almost exclusively German ethnic character of the synod also began to change. These inter-related processes were greatly accelerated by a number of forces, the most dramatic of which was the

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Second World War and its impact on the whole of American society.

The Synod attempted to follow its people into the cities and on to the battlefields. This in turn led to new problems for which solutions had to be found and new opportunities for which very often institutions had to be created. In traditional Missouri Synod fashion, a Scriptural rationale was sought for the expansion of the church's duty and mission. To a great extent, this was a prime factor in inducing an ever increasing number of men in the clerical and lay leadership of the synod to broaden their understanding of the church's true mission. An illustration of this trend can be seen in the expansion of graduate education in the various synodical institutions since the conclusion of World War II.

Thus the post-World War II period has seen an increasing demand on the part of laity and clergy alike for the church to move toward what apparently is the mainstream of Christianity in the United States. This demand is by no means uniquely Lutheran or Missourian. However, Missouri's formerly exclusive character and the seemingly sudden appearance of dissidence in what had previously appeared to be an ecclesiastical monolith surprised many casual observers.

The anti-administration, anti-intellectual tenor

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of the conservatives' rebellion against this drift into the mainstream is unmistakable. Their literature, whether it is The Christian News, Sola Scriptura, Affirm or The Confessional Lutheran bears this out. Their common denominator is a deploring of what they think is a drift "to the left," intentional or otherwise, in confessionalism, church polity, social or concomitant political involvement. They believe that all of this has been perpetrated by an entrenched, liberal elite that has effectively taken over synodical leadership and made unwitting tools of synod's traditionally conservative top administrators. Even the acknowledged conservative President Jacob A. O. Preus has not escaped their criticism. They see their task as reversing the liberalizing tendencies in synod by securing control of its boards, offices and educational institutions. Failure to do this would in their view necessitate a split in the Synod along conservative-liberal lines.

The resolution of this struggle remains undecided.

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APPENDIXES

A BRIEF STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINAL POSITION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD OF MISSOURI, OHIO, AND OTHER STATES

OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

1. We teach that the Holy Scriptures differ from all other books in the world in that they are the Word of God. They are the Word of God because the holy men of God who wrote the Scriptures wrote only that which the Holy Ghost communicated to them by inspiration, 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21. We teach also that the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures is not a so-called "theological deduction," but that it is taught by direct statements of the Scriptures, 2 Tim. 3:16; John 10:35, Rom. 3:2; 1 Cor. 2:13. Since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they contain no errors or contradictions, but that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters, John 10:35.

2. We furthermore teach regarding the Holy Scriptures that they are given by God to the Christian Church for the foundation of faith, Eph. 2:20. Hence the Holy Scriptures are the sole source from which all doctrines proclaimed in the Christian Church must be taken and therefore, too, the sole rule and norm by which all teachers and doctrines must be examined and judged. -- With the Confessions of our Church we teach also that the "rule of faith" (*analogia fidei*) according to which the Holy Scriptures are to be understood are the clear passages of *the Scriptures themselves* which set forth the individual doctrines. (Apology. *Triglotta*, p. 441, § 60; Mueller, p. 284.) The rule of faith is not the man-made so-called "totality of Scripture" ("*Ganzes der Schrift*").

3. We reject the doctrine which under the name of science has gained wide popularity in the Church of our day that Holy Scripture is not in all its parts the Word of God, but in part the Word of God and in part the word of man and hence does, or at least might, contain error. We reject this erroneous doctrine as horrible and blasphemous, since it flatly contradicts Christ and His holy apostles, sets up men as judges over the Word of God, and thus overthrows the foundation of the Christian Church and its faith.

OF OPEN QUESTIONS

44. Those questions in the domain of Christian doctrine may be termed open questions which Scripture answers either not at all or not clearly. Since neither an individual nor the Church as a whole is permitted to develop or augment the Christian doctrine, but are rather ordered and commanded by God to continue in the doctrine of the apostles, 2 Thess. 2:15; Acts 2:42, open questions must remain open questions. -- Not to be included in the number of open questions are the following: the doctrine of the Church and the Ministry, of Sunday, of Chiliasm, and of Antichrist, these doctrines being clearly defined in Scripture.

OF THE SYMBOLS OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH

45. We accept as our confessions all the symbols contained in the Book of Concord of the year 1580. -- The symbols of the Lutheran Church are not a rule of faith beyond, and supplementary to, Scripture, but a confession of the doctrines of Scripture over against those who deny these doctrines.

46. Since the Christian Church cannot make doctrines, but can and should simply profess the doctrine revealed in Holy Scripture, the doctrinal decisions of the symbols are binding upon the conscience not because our Church has made them nor because they are the outcome of doctrinal controversies, but only because they are the doctrinal decisions of Holy Scripture itself.

47. Those desiring to be admitted into the public ministry of the Lutheran Church pledge themselves to teach according to the symbols not "in so far as," but "because," the symbols agree with Scripture. He who is unable to accept as Scriptural the doctrine set forth in the Lutheran symbols and their rejection of the corresponding errors must not be admitted into the ministry of the Lutheran Church.

48. The confessional obligation covers all doctrines, not only those that are treated *ex professo*, but also those that are merely introduced in support of other doctrines.

The obligation does not extend to historical statements, "purely exegetical questions," and other matters not belonging to the doctrinal content of the symbols. All *doctrines* of the Symbols are based on clear statements of Scripture.

✠ In Nomine Jesu ✠

✠

A STATEMENT

✠

We, the undersigned, as individuals, members of Synod, conscious of our responsibilities and duties before the Lord of the Church, herewith subscribe to the following statement:

ONE

We *affirm our unswerving loyalty to the great evangelical heritage of historic Lutheranism. We believe in its message and mission for this crucial hour in the time of man.*

We therefore deplore any and every tendency which would limit the power of our heritage, reduce it to narrow legalism, and confine it by manmade traditions.

TWO

We *affirm our faith in the great Lutheran principle of the inerrancy, certainty, and all-sufficiency of Holy Writ.*

We therefore deplore a tendency in our Synod to substitute human judgments, synodical resolutions, or other sources of authority for the supreme authority of Scripture.

THREE

We *affirm our conviction that the Gospel must be given free course so that it may be preached in all its truth and power to all the nations of the earth.*

We therefore deplore all man-made walls and barriers and all ecclesiastical traditions which would hinder the free course of the Gospel in the world.

FOUR

We *believe that the ultimate and basic motive for all our life and work must be love — love of God, love of the Word, love of the brethren, love of souls.*

We *affirm our conviction that the law of love must also find application to our relationship to other Lutheran bodies.*

- We therefore deplore a loveless attitude which is manifesting itself within Synod. This unscriptural attitude has been expressed in suspicions of brethren, in the impugning of motives, and in the condemnation of all who have expressed differing opinions concerning some of the problems confronting our Church today.

FIVE

WE *affirm our conviction that sound exegetical procedure is the basis for sound Lutheran theology.*

- We therefore deplore the fact that Romans 16:17, 18 has been applied to all Christians who differ from us in certain points of doctrine. It is our conviction, based on sound exegetical and hermeneutical principles, that this text does not apply to the present situation in the Lutheran Church of America.
- We furthermore deplore the misuse of First Thessalonians 5:22 in the translation "avoid every appearance of evil." This text should be used only in its true meaning, "avoid evil in every form."

SIX

WE *affirm the historic Lutheran position concerning the central importance of the* una sancta *and the local congregation. We believe that there should be a re-emphasis of the privileges and responsibilities of the local congregation also in the matter of determining questions of fellowship.*

- We therefore deplore the new and improper emphasis on the synodical organization as basic in our consideration of the problems of the Church. We believe that no organizational loyalty can take the place of loyalty to Christ and His Church.

SEVEN

WE *affirm our abiding faith in the historic Lutheran position concerning the centrality of the Atonement and the Gospel as the revelation of God's redeeming love in Christ.*

- We therefore deplore any tendency which reduces the warmth and power of the Gospel to a set of intellectual propositions which are to be grasped solely by the mind of man.

EIGHT

WE *affirm our conviction that any two or more Christians may pray together to the Triune God in the name of Jesus Christ if the purpose for which they meet and pray is right according to the Word of God. This obviously includes meetings of groups called for the purpose of discussing doctrinal differences.*

- We therefore deplore the tendency to decide the question of prayer fellowship on any other basis beyond the clear words of Scripture.

NINE

WE *believe that the term "unionism" should be applied only to acts in which a clear and unmistakable denial of Scriptural truth or approval of error is involved.*

- We therefore deplore the tendency to apply this non-Biblical term to any and every contact between Christians of different denominations.

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TEN

We *affirm the historic Lutheran position that no Christian has a right to take offense at anything which God has commanded in His Holy Word. The plea of offense must not be made a cover for the irresponsible expression of prejudices, traditions, customs, and usages.*

ELEVEN

We *affirm our conviction that in keeping with the historic Lutheran tradition and in harmony with the Synodical resolution adopted in 1938 regarding Church fellowship, such fellowship is possible without complete agreement in details of doctrine and practice which have never been considered divisive in the Lutheran Church.*

TWELVE

We *affirm our conviction that our Lord has richly, singularly, and undeservedly blessed our beloved Synod during the first century of its existence in America. We pledge the efforts of our hearts and hands to the building of Synod as the second century opens and new opportunities are given us by the Lord of the Church.*

✠ Soli Deo Gloria ✠

In Witness Whereof, we, the undersigned, affix our signatures this twenty-fifth day of September in the year of our Lord 1945 at Chicago, Illinois.

✠

ACKER, LAWRENCE	FRIEDRICH, N. J.	KURTH, ERWIN
AMLING, C. M.	GEISEMAN, O. A.	KUMNICK, H. H.
ARNDT, W.	GIESELER, C. A.	LINDEMANN, FRED H.
BARTELS, H.	GLABE, E. B.	LINDEMANN, HERBERT
BAUER, W. E.	GRAEBNER, THEO.	LOOSE, F. W.
BEHNKE, C. A.	HANSER, ARTHUR R.	MEYER, ADOLF F.
BERNTHAL, AUG. F.	HEMMETER, BERNARD H.	MILLER, PAUL F.
BOEZIN, AUG. F.	HEMMETER, H. B.	POLACK, W. G.
BRETSCHER, PAUL	HILMER, WM. H.	SAUER, O. A.
BRUENING, WM. F.	HOFFMANN, OSWALD	SCHROEDEL, THEO. H.
BRUSTAT, A. W.	KRETZMANN, A. R.	THEISS, O. H.
CAEMMERER, RICHARD R.	KRETZMANN, KARL	WEBER, EDMUND W.
COATES, THOMAS	KRETZMANN, O. P.	WENCHEL, J. FREDERIC
DEFFNER, L. H.	KUECHLE, GEO.	WIND, H. F.
ENGELBRECHT, H. H.	KUNTZ, WERNER	

✠

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

OF MISSOURI, OHIO AND OTHER STATES

J. W. BEHNKEN, D.D., PRESIDENT • EUCLID 1114
533 S. KENILWORTH AVE., OAK PARK, ILLINOIS

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

January 18, 1947
Oak Park, Illinois

Dear Brother:

Some time ago, a group of our brethren felt constrained to issue "A Statement." This "Statement" was received by the members of the clergy and others with varying reactions. In fact, there was a rather divergent opinion on the degree and prevalency of some of the situations set forth.

Since the issuance of "A Statement" much discussion has taken place. Conferences between the Praesidium and the "Continuation Committee of the Signers" have taken place. The Praesidium and the College of Presidents met with the signers of "A Statement." At the latter meeting it was agreed that "A Statement" be studied by "Ten and Ten" and that the President of Synod encourage our pastors and congregations to study a number of important topics which were enumerated in a former letter.

Several meetings between the "Ten and Ten" have been held. A word of commendation is in place. These brethren have done some very fine work. They issued a document on "Sola Scriptura" which is excellent. They devoted much time to a thorough and scholarly study of Rom. 16:17-18. It should be said also that a fine, brotherly spirit characterized the meetings.

The Praesidium of Synod, concerned about growing misunderstandings and confusion in parts of Synod, had further meetings with the "Continuation Committee of the Signers," with the "Ten" appointed by the President of Synod, as well as several informal meetings in an effort to resolve the matter in a God-pleasing manner. Recently another meeting was held

with "the representatives of the Signers," at which the following agreement was reached:

"An earnest evaluation of the discussions involved in 'A Statement' has demonstrated that we are agreed on many of its assertions, even though agreement has not been reached on some of the specific questions raised. The discussions have also shown that interpretations of some of the expressions in the accompanying letter and in the deplorations have been made which were not intended by the Signers. The language is not always clear to everyone. Nothing has developed, however, which is divisive of church fellowship.

"The longer discussions of this nature are drawn out, especially if the basis of the discussions is not understood by all participants in the same sense, the greater looms the danger of misunderstanding and the injection of personalities, temperament, personal experience, and emotion where calm objective judgment should prevail.

"It has therefore been agreed in a meeting of the Praesidium and of the representatives of the Signers that in the interest of peace and harmony in our midst and for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God at large 'A Statement' and 'The Accompanying Letter' be withdrawn as a basis of discussion so that the issues involved may be studied objectively on the basis of theses prepared under the auspices of the President of Synod.

"The withdrawal of 'A Statement' as a basis of discussion shall not be interpreted as a retraction; nor shall it mean that the issues involved shall now be glossed over or ignored. They shall become the topics of special study and prayerful consideration which will lead us, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, to an ever more consecrated adherence to the Word and will of God."

The Praesidium is happy to give you the above information since the brethren assured us repeatedly that "A Statement" was not intended to have anything whatsoever to do with the questions of "Lutheran Union" and "Selective Fellowship." They assured us also that, with Synod, they hold that fellowship with persistent errorists is contrary to the Word of God and that even the most trivial false doctrine may become divisive of fellowship.

We were assured also that above agreement means that the Signers as a group will no longer exist and that the "Continuation Committee" will no longer exist. There will no longer be any propaganda for "A Statement" and "Speaking The Truth in Love." Neither of these will any longer be disseminated.

Brethren, may we now ask that everyone will exercise true Christian love and patience and give the Praesidium time and opportunity to present materials for an objective study of the issues involved!

With cordial greetings,

Yours in Christ,

J. W. Behnken

JWB:LMB

The Inerrancy Of Scripture

Delivered to the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, February 25, 1958

In this paper I propose to defend the paradox that the Book of God's truth contains errors. What is more, I hope to show that by the proper resolution of this paradox we in fact magnify the truth that comes to us by divine revelation. What is set forth here is necessarily devoted to what is called "the human side" of that revelation.

Allow me to add that I have volunteered for this task, not with any particular relish, but on the conviction that the time has come to take a long look at one of the sub-headings under the locus, DE SCRIPTURA. My own feeling in the matter is that this kind of undertaking is part of our task--possibly even part of our cross--as persons belonging to the faculty of this Seminary. Such a responsibility makes our position less comfortable than we might like it to be. Yet I should like to suggest that only by thoroughly discussing such subjects as may admittedly touch on very sensitive areas do we fully exercise our office as teachers of the church.

Even on the personal level we are to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord. Precisely this kind of maturing should be the outcome of the present discussions. In fact, it has been and continues to be my prayer that this will be the end-result of what is read and said of the subject under fire. For I am fully persuaded that some serious reflection on the human factors in the process we know as revelation will only increase our appreciation of God's condescending grace. For in all this the real question lies deeper than the mere supposition that God has preserved the Biblical writers from all erroneous statements. The real question is, as Dr. Sasse has pointed out in his paper SACRA SCRIPTURA, "How does the Word of God come to us in Holy Scripture, and how is the Word of God to be distinguished from the words of men?" It is this question which has created a deep crisis in all of Christianity. We can avoid facing this question only at the peril of our own professional competence and integrity.

At our fall retreat President Fuerbringer assured me that the document we know as the Brief Statement was originally designed to be a piece of "Besprechungstheologie." As things went, it did not really get much serious scrutiny, mostly because many things were assumed to have been permanently fixed and formulated which, in fact, can never be expressed absolutely in any language. Possibly, therefore, you will not misunderstand me when I say that I want to direct myself to that sentence in the first paragraph of the BRIEF STATEMENT which reads:

> "Since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they contain no errors or contradictions, but that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters, John 10, 35."

I for one cannot bring myself to the point of believing that this sentence was explored in all of its dimensions before it was adopted. If it had been, I should think less of those who taught us than I want to. At the same time I entertain the hope that this sentence could not, in the wording quoted, pass this faculty today, or if it did, that terms "truth," "error," "contradiction," and "historical" would receive some very careful and limiting definitions. For, as the statement reads, it is a pure rationalization, built on the assumption that our Scriptures are, like the Book of Mormon, a gift that fell straight from heaven, when in fact, it is the book of the people of God, with all that such a statement implies. I have quoted this particular sentence from the BRIEF STATEMENT because it rather accurately describes what actually passes for inerrancy in our circles. Putting it more specifically, inerrancy is understood to mean: 1. that the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, the Books of Samuel and Kings, Chronicles and even the Gospels offer us genuine history; 2. that these accounts are historically accurate in every detail; and 3. that any secular matters described or alluded to contain no errors in fact.

Of course, there has been some adjustment on this last point. We no longer insist on the geocentric view of the world that the Biblical authors assume. We do not take the account of Joshua making the sun and the moon to stand still in its literal meaning: for, in the face of overwhelming evidence, we have been driven to the conclusion that this portion of the Scriptures does not even propose to speak in scientifically accurate language. In passing, though, it should be noted that it was one of our pastors who wrote a book the thesis of which, roughly put, was this: The Scriptures depend for their reliability and veracity on taking their statements literally; the Joshua story tells us that the sun and moon stood still; therefore no Christian can accept the Copernican theory. I am referring to Friedrich Pasch's CHRISTLICHE WELTANSCHAUUNG, as published by the Germania Company of Milwaukee in 1904.

We would, I am sure, hardly accept such a conclusion today. We allow for the possibility that the Biblical statement need not be taken literally. Incidentally, we have been willing to do this because of the volume of evidence from sources outside the Scriptures. We are quite ready to say at this point that the Biblical writer used language which he and his contemporaries believed to be accurate. In other words, we admit that he spoke to the people of his time in their language and according to their "Weltanschauung." Here is the nub of the matter under discussion.

The observation that the decisive issue in the question under discussion is the outlook of the author and his immediate readers can and must be extended to include other areas, even matters of historical detail. For the Bible must be understood as proposing to communicate, in the first instance to people who did not only use languages that are foreign to us, but who also viewed life differently from us. For that reason an insistence on inerrancy as that concept is usually understood in our church, does in fact--

1. Make of The Bible Something Less Than What It Proposed To Be

For one thing, this notion of inerrancy is bound to a single-surface view of the text of Scripture. That is to say, the Scriptures are looked upon as having been produced by a single act of inspiration in each author and created by one grand sweep of the sacred author's pen. All of the statements that ours is not a mechanical view of the inspiration notwithstanding, the average pastor teaches the Bible as though it were inspired in just this way. This way of teaching continues all the way through our prep schools. I make bold to say this because I have seen what a shock it is to "our second year men in Hermeneutics to discover that there are, most likely, several layers under the present Biblical documents; namely, those of oral tradition and of other documents.

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RESOLUTIONS

NOTE: Reports and overtures treated in the resolutions are referred to according to the following code:

CW *Convention Workbook*, mailed to all pastors, teachers, and lay delegates 8 weeks before the convention.

URO *Unpublished Reports and Overtures*, 64-page printed supplement to the *Convention Workbook*, distributed at the convention and reprinted in these PROCEEDINGS, pp. 199—250. But page references are to the original printing.

TB "Today's Business," mimeographed material distributed every day of the convention.

Un "Unpublished," designates reports and overtures in *URO*.

M "Mimeographed," designates mimeographed overtures distributed at the convention as the first 36 pages of "Today's Business," also printed in these PROCEEDINGS, pp. 251—261. But page references are to *TB*.

COMMITTEE 1 — Missions

Prayer Read at the Beginning of the Report of the Floor Committee on Missions

O God the Father, who didst send Thy Son into the world to redeem the world, which Thou didst create for Thy glory;

O God the Son, who hast redeemed the whole world to God by Thy blood, who art Lord over all things and Head of Thy body, the church;

O God the Holy Spirit, who art the Comforter sent by the Father and the Son to lead us into all truth and to send and guide us on Thy saving mission to a lost world;

We beseech Thee, O holy triune God, to pardon us for our sins of disobedience against Thy Law and for our littleness of faith in Thy Gospel. Do not cast us aside because of our unfaithfulness, but for Thy mercy's sake be faithful to Thy promise of full pardon to all who fully confess their sins to Thee.

Lord, we have nothing to bring to Thee but our sins and our emptiness. Forgive us for Jesus' sake, and fill us with Thy grace. We praise Thee and Thee only for the fruits of the Holy Spirit manifest in the life and work of Thy church. We are not worthy of the least of all Thy mercies, but Thou art worthy to receive blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and might.

Help us to see ourselves as Thy mission to men in their every need, to society in all its tensions, to the church in all its tribulation, and to the whole world in all its futile struggles to find its peace without Thee. Give us, who are Thy sent ones, Thy compassion for Thy lost ones.

Teach us to remember that we are but the dust into which Thy Spirit breathes the breath of life, the earthen vessels Thou hast selected to be the treasures of Thy grace, and ambassadors of Thy kingdom, which Thou alone canst establish in the hearts of men.

Keep us as a Synod from becoming so preoccupied with ourselves that we lose our sense and purpose of being Thy mission. Preserve us from that pride which thanks Thee that we are not as other men are, lest we leave this place proud of our heritage but unmindful of that heritage to which we have been begotten by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Help us to glory in nothing save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus, by whom the world is crucified unto us and we unto the world. Let Thy Word be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. Preserve us from the paralysis of fear. Grant instead Thy promised gifts of power and love and a sound mind. Cause us all to walk together as saints of God who know they are yet sinners; who deal with one another not as the good or the bad but as the forgiven, who love much because they are forgiven much by Thee.

Hear our prayer for the sake of Him who ever liveth to make intercession for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

The following six resolutions (1-01 A to 1-01 F) refer to "Report of Mission Self-Study and Survey, I. Theological Basis of the Mission of the Church" (*CW*, pp. 113—123).

The Church Is God's Mission

RESOLUTION 1-01 A

WHEREAS, The Father sent forth His Word to create and preserve the world; and

WHEREAS, Upon man's revolt the Father sent His Son into the world to redeem the world; and

WHEREAS, The Son in obedience to His Father's commission laid aside His glory, became a man to serve men, and died on the cross to reconcile all things unto God; and

WHEREAS, The risen and victorious Lord sent forth His church on His mission when He appeared to His disciples on the day of resurrection, declaring: "Peace be unto you; as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you"; and

WHEREAS, The Father and the Son together sent the Holy Spirit into the world as the great Missionary until our Lord's return; therefore be it

Resolved, That we affirm in faith, humility, and joy that the mission is the Lord's; He is the great Doer and Sender; and be it further

Resolved, That we affirm that the mission is not an optional activity in the church, but the church is caught up in the manifold and dynamic mission of God; and be it further

Resolved, That we thank the Lord of the church for all the ways in which He has graciously used us and our church body in His mission, blessing us and making us a blessing unto many; and be it further

Resolved, That we repent of our individual and corporate self-centeredness and disobedience, whenever it has caused us to regard our local congregations or our

Synod as ends in themselves and moved us to give self-preservation priority over God's mission; and be it finally

Resolved, That we affirm that the church is God's mission. The church's ministries of worship, service, fellowship, and nurture all have a missionary dimension. We rejoice that for Christ's sake God forgives us our sins of self-centered disobedience, and we place ourselves, our congregations, and our Synod into His loving hand as willing instruments of His great mission to the world.

Action: This resolution was *adopted*.

The Church Is Christ's Mission to the Whole World

RESOLUTION 1-01 B

WHEREAS, God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life; and

WHEREAS, Christ has sent His disciples out into all the world, saying: "Go ye and make disciples of all nations"; therefore be it

Resolved, That we affirm that the church is Christ's mission to the whole world. Christians will approach men of other faiths in humility and love. They joyfully acknowledge that God is active in the lives of all men through His continued creative and providential concern, through the Law written in their hearts, and through God's revelation of Himself in creation and nature. Christians affirm a common humanity with all men. They confess a common sinfulness. They rejoice over a universal redemption won for all in Jesus Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That we reconsecrate ourselves with everything we are and have to the task of witnessing Christ in deed and word to all the world, thankfully making full use also of the communication tools which God is offering to the church through science and technology for this age of the population explosion; and be it further

Resolved, That in the face of the great unfinished task we rejoice over all faithful Christian efforts to witness Christ to all the world; and be it finally

Resolved, That we recognize that our sister mission churches in other lands have been placed by God into other circumstances and are subservient not to us but to the Lord, who makes His church His mission to the whole world.

Action: This resolution was *adopted*.

The Church Is Christ's Mission to the Church

RESOLUTION 1-01 C

WHEREAS, Every Christian by virtue of the saving faith which the Holy Spirit creates in his heart is bound to His Lord and enters into a real and living unity with every other member of Christ's holy body, the church; and

WHEREAS, The same Word of Christ that bids Christians to go and teach all nations also instructs them to teach their fellow Christians all things whatsoever Christ has commanded them; therefore be it

Resolved, That we affirm that the church is Christ's mission to the church. In obedience to the church's Head and in sanctified loyalty to his congregation and his church body, a Christian will be ready with good conscience both to witness and to listen to all Christians. Like the Bereans, the Christian will search the Scriptures to test the truth of what he hears and what he says; and be it further

Resolved, That we affirm as Lutheran Christians that the Evangelical Lutheran Church is chiefly a confessional movement within the total body of Christ rather than a denomination emphasizing institutional barriers of separation. The Lutheran Christian uses the Lutheran Confessions for the primary purpose for which they were framed: to confess Christ and His Gospel boldly and lovingly to all Christians. While the Confessions seek to repel all attacks against the Gospel, they are not intended to be a kind of Berlin wall to stop communication with other Christians; and be it further

Resolved, That we affirm that by virtue of our unity with other Christians in the body of Christ, we should work together when it will edify Christ's body and advance His mission, refusing cooperation, however, on such occasions when it would deny God's Word; and be it finally

Resolved, That we affirm that because the church is Christ's mission to the church, Christians should speak the Word of God to one another as they nurture, edify, and educate one another for Christian faith and life. Therefore as a Synod we value our strong tradition of Christian education and seek to extend it throughout life, for laity and clergy. Far from employing agencies of Christian education primarily in our own institutional self-interest, we will endeavor to make them ever more effective tools in equipping God's people for His mission.

Action: This resolution was *adopted*.

The Church Is Christ's Mission to the Whole Society

RESOLUTION 1-01 D

WHEREAS, Jesus Christ is Lord of all the world and in every area of life; and

WHEREAS, The Christian recognizes no area of life that may be termed "secular" in the sense that it is removed from the lordship of Jesus Christ, though it may not be under the control of the institutional church; and

WHEREAS, The Christian does God's work in the world through various vocations in the home, church, and state as distinguished by Dr. Martin Luther; therefore be it

Resolved, That we affirm that the church is Christ's mission to the whole society; and be it further

Resolved, That we recognize the difficulty of understanding in every instance whether God desires Christians to act corporately or individually or both in His mission to the whole society; they will, however, seek His will through prayer and mutual study; and be it further

Resolved, That Christians be exhorted to serve God in every honest occupation, recognizing that all of life is the arena of a Christian's ministry to God and man; and be it further

Resolved, That Christians be encouraged to seek the peace of the city, as God commands, working together with their fellow citizens of the nation and of the world, whatever their race, class, or belief; and be it finally

Resolved, That Christians be encouraged as they attempt, under the judgment and forgiveness of God, to discover and further His good purposes in every area of life, to extend justice, social acceptance, and a full share in God's bounty to all people who are discriminated against and oppressed by reason of race, class, creed, or other unwarranted distinctions. Christians recognize that all their fellowmen come from the Father's creating hand and that His Son's nail-pierced hands reach out in love to all of them.

Action: This resolution was *adopted*.

The Church Is Christ's Mission to the Whole Man

RESOLUTION 1-01 E

WHEREAS, The Scriptures teach us that God's love reaches out to the whole man, for God the Father lovingly creates and preserves man; the Son redeemed him in body, soul, and mind; the Holy Spirit brings him to faith and moves him to use body, soul, and mind in God's great mission; and

WHEREAS, Our Lord became a man and ministered to the needs of the whole man, forgiving sins, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and even providing wine for a marriage feast; and

WHEREAS, Our Lord at His return will solemnly report whether or not we fed, clothed, and visited Him in the least of His hungry, naked, and forsaken brethren; therefore be it

Resolved, That we affirm that the church is God's mission to the whole man. Wherever a Christian as God's witness encounters the man to whom God sends him, he meets someone whose body, soul, and mind are related in one totality. Therefore Christians, individually and corporately, prayerfully seek to serve the needs of the total man. Christians bring the Good News of the living Christ to dying men. They bring men instruction in all useful knowledge. They help and befriend their neighbor on our small planet in every bodily need. They help their neighbor to improve and protect his property and business by bringing him economic help and enabling him to earn his daily bread in dignity and self-respect. Christians minister to the needs of the whole man, not because they have forgotten the witness of the Gospel but because they remember it. They know that the demonstration of their faith in Christ adds power to its proclamation.

Action: This resolution was *adopted*.

The Whole Church Is Christ's Mission

RESOLUTION 1-01 F

WHEREAS, Every Christian is commissioned a missionary through baptism, for through the selfsame water and Word the Holy Spirit makes us both God's children and His witnesses to the world when He says: "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you"; and

WHEREAS, All who are baptized into Christ are baptized into His death and resurrection, into His mission, and into His body; therefore be it

Resolved, That we affirm that the whole church is Christ's mission. Therefore we deplore anything that seeks to divide what God has joined together. We deplore the clericalism that views a congregation primarily as God's instrument to sustain the ordained ministry, thus smothering the diverse gifts of the Holy Spirit to His people. Equally we deplore the laicism that chafes under the shepherding by which a loving God seeks to equip His children for His mission. We deplore the racism which refuses to repent of its sin and denies the unity of all Christians in Christ and His mission. We deplore the desecration of Christianity by the multiplication of sects as though the Gospel were a religion of human design instead of God's outreach after men in the giving of Himself. The divisions in the institutional church are as real as the unity in Christ's body which joins all Christians together. We deplore the wars and political struggles that set Christians and other people in one nation against those in another. We recognize that the Christian lives in the tension between his own imperfect understanding of God's truth and his knowledge that in spite of errors and divisions he is joined together in Christ's body with all who truly believe in its Head. The Christian lives in the tension between Christ's lordship, which is perfect, and his own discipleship, which is not. The Christian rejoices over the existence of every fellow believer in Christ his Savior, because thereby Christ is preached and His mission is implemented, for the whole church is Christ's mission.

Action: This resolution was *adopted*.

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Photographed from the October 17, 1969 ST. LOUIS LUTHERAN, p. 1.

Council of Presidents Repudiates 'Christian News'

The following public statement to the members of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod was released Oct. 3 by the President and Vice Presidents together with all District Presidents of the Synod.

We, the Council of Presidents, in the interest of the extension of the Kingdom of God through the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and committed to the Synod and its objectives, are deeply concerned about the conservation and protection of a unity of spirit and purpose, and the protection of pastors, teachers, and congregations in the performance of their duties.

We are of the conviction that the publication now known as "Christian News," disseminated with or without the prior consent of those who receive it, is an obstacle to the furtherance of the objectives of the Synod, breeds mistrust, creates unnecessary tensions, and disturbs God's servants in the performance of their tasks.

We, therefore, unanimously repudiate this publication and caution against lending credence and support to it.

We pledge to help the pastors, teachers and congregations of the Synod attain a greater measure of mutual confidence and joy in their service.

In the Name of the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ.

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During his professional career he has served as teacher and principal in the Lutheran School system of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod; chairman of the Social Studies department at Lutheran High School North, St. Louis, Missouri; and as Lecturer at Saint Louis University. He accepted a position as Instructor at the Department of History, Northern Michigan University, Marquette, Michigan, in February, 1968, and returned to its permanent faculty in September, 1970.

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